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Contents

South Africa—the moral case against sanctions 343–5
Louis MacNeice as critic 346
Stefan Collini: "research" in the Humanities 349
Guzzling in London—Boswell 1785–9 347
Second World War: Eisenhower as strategist; German barbarism; Vichy and after 365–7
Francis Steegmuller: the English garden at Caserta 348

ANCIENT HISTORY 369, BIOGRAPHY 347, CHILDREN'S BOOKS 353–60, FICTION 361–2,
FRENCH LITERATURE 363–4, HORTICULTURE 348, LITERATURE AND CRITICISM 346,
PHILOSOPHY 368, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS 343–5, SECOND WORLD WAR 365–7

SIMON JENKINS
T. C. BARKER
PATRICIA CRAIG
BLAKE MORRISON
KEITH WALKER
ROY PORTER
PAT ROGERS
FRANCIS STEEGMULLER
ALEXANDER URQUHART
STEFAN COLLINI
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS
Anthony Sampson: *Black and Gold—Tycoons, revolutionaries and apartheid* 343–5
T. R. Gourvish: *British Railways 1948–73—A business history* 345
Louis MacNeice: *Selected Literary Criticism* 346
Mates (poem) 346
Irma S. Lustig and Frederick A. Pottle (Editors): *Boswell—The English experiment, 1785–1789* 347
Joan Baum: *The Calculating Passion of Ada Byron* 347
Fanny Burney: *Selected Letters and Journals* 347
Carlo Ligt: *Il Giardino Inglese di Caserta—Un'avventura settecentesca* 348
Stephen Knight: *The Starling Jungle*
Roger Turner: *Better Garden Design* 348
Viewpoint: Research in the Humanities 349
American notes 350
Letters on Government and Education, Rousseau and Violence, 'Epistemology and Cognition', etc. 351

Commentary
Shakespeare: *The Henrys—Henry IV parts 1 and 2 and Henry V* (Old Vic) 352
Jean-Paul Sartre: *Intimacy* (The Café Theatre) 352
Caryl Churchill: *Serious Money* (Royal Court) 352

Children's books 353–60
Mary Flanagan: *Trust* 361
Farooq Khalid: *Black Mirrors* 361
Mary Melwood: *Reflections in Black Glass* 361
Augusto Roa Bastos: *I the Supreme* 361
Marta Morazzoni: *La ragazza col turbante* 362
Bernard Sichers: *La Gloire du tricolore* 362
Giovanni Arpino: *Passo d'addio* 362
Christian Giudicelli: *Station balnéaire*
Jean-Denis Bredin: *L'Absence* 362
Alain-Fournier: *Le Grand Meaulnes. Miracles. Lettres à sa famille. Lettres au petit B. The Lost Domain—Le Grand Meaulnes. Towards the Lost Domain—Lettres from London 1905*
Daniel Leuwers (Editor): *Le Grand Meaulnes—Images et documents*
Alain Rivière, J.-G. Morgenbaler and Françoise Garcia (Editors): *La Peinture, le coeur et l'esprit—Correspondance André Lhote, Alain-Fournier et Jacques Rivière. Tomes 1 et 2.*
David Arkell: *Alain-Fournier—A brief life (1886–1914)*
Robert Duterme: *Alain-Fournier ou le fantasme amoureux* 363–4
Peter Dale: *Narrow Straits*
Jules Laforgue: *Poems of Jules Laforgue*
Charles Baudelaire: *The Complete Verse, Volume One* 364
David Eisenhower: *Eisenhower at War 1943–1945* 365–6
Charles Carrington: *Soldier at Bomber Command* 366
Alex Danchev: *Very Special Relationship—Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American alliance, 1941–44* 366
John F. Sweets: *Choices in Vichy France—The French under Nazi occupation*
Herbert R. Lottman: *The People's Anger—Justice and revenge in post-liberation France* 367
L. F. Haber: *The Poisonous Cloud—Chemical warfare in the First World War*
Omer Bartov: *The Eastern Front, 1941–45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* 367
D. S. Hutchinson: *The Virtues of Aristotle* 368
David Bostock: *Plato's "Phaedo"* 368
C. M. Woodhouse: *George Gemistos Plethon—The last of the Hellenes* 368
William L. MacDonald: *The Architecture of the Roman Empire—Volume Two, An Urban Appraisal* 369
Mario Attilio Levi: *Augusto e il suo tempo* 369

Among this week's contributors 350
Author, Author 350
Index of books reviewed 371
TLS Listings 370–72
Cover picture: "Summer", 1927, from *The Wood-Engravings of Tirzah Ravillous*, compiled by Anna Ullman (48pp, Gordon Fraser, £17.50, 0 86092 099 2). Tirzah Garwood, first Eric Ravillous's pupil, then his wife, gave up engraving in order to look after her children. All the work reproduced here was done in a few youthful years. It can be seen until May 10 at the Townier Art Gallery, High Street, Old Town, Eastbourne.

Good morals, good business?

Simon Jenkins

ANTHONY SAMPSON
Black and Gold: Tycoons, revolutionaries and apartheid
280pp, Hodder and Stoughton, £19.95.
0 340 39524 9

Anthony Sampson is a firm follower of the Apocalypse Now! school of South African studies. His thesis in *Black and Gold: Tycoons, revolutionaries and apartheid* is simple. Apartheid was an abhorrent ideology introduced by D. F. Malan's Nationalists in 1948 (though rooted deep in English colonialism). It was sustained by international capital, which saw in it a mechanism for securing cheap and compliant labour. Rising black aspirations have recently threatened this structure, and "waves of black anger" are producing the conditions for imminent revolution. On television recently, Sampson predicted "one-to-two years" before an explosion.

Sampson must be a reassuring companion on a visit to southern Africa. He knows his own mind and is on first-name terms with all the right-thinking people. Wrong-thinking ones he avoids. His heroes are his old friends in the exiled African National Congress (ANC). His villains are the Afrikaner politicians and soldiers who have ruled South Africa for the past four decades.

Between the occupants of Sampson's heaven and hell lie the souls in purgatory: capitalists and business men restlessly searching for both profit and salvation. Their quest would be miraculously resolved, he implies, were they only to take a draught of his magic formula, mandatory economic sanctions. "If only you'd tried it before", he wags his finger at the hapless multinationals; but they always seem to have left it too late.

The chapter headings in Sampson's book read like old friends from the columns of the *Observer*: "Across the Abyss", "The Roots of

Revolt", "The End of the Road". Everywhere are intimations of imminent crisis, of twilights, catastrophes, revolutions. South Africa's political economy is now so steeped in contradiction that apartheid's dialectical antithesis, black nationalism, is unavoidable. The impending upheaval should thus be helped on its way by foreign governments imposing sanctions and business men "changing sides" and divesting themselves of their South African holdings. This in turn will undermine the white government, leading to its overthrow, to democracy and the assumption of power by the ANC.

Sampson picks out the relationship between international business and the ANC as "the critical frontier in the South African crisis", though he at no point justifies this priority. He rightly traces the frontier back to the conflict between Boer and Briton in the 1890s and to the transformation of the Afrikaner from *Voortrekker* to nationalist. This process reached fruition in South Africa's first true anti-colonial victory in 1948—an event whose essential nationalism is still neglected by those who prefer to treat the country as akin to colonial Kenya or Rhodesia.

Malan and later Hendrik Verwoerd proceeded to institutionalize racial separation. Verwoerd's "Grand Apartheid" relegated blacks to a system of independent tribal states, so they could be classed as foreigners and a ramshackle democracy established on tribal lines. It was a drastic attempt to sanitize a political discrimination in a form that Verwoerd thought compatible with the small-state nationalism then sweeping across Africa. Cynical and repressive it may have been. But for all the ridicule heaped on its head, the homeland policy has defied those who said it could never be imposed. The Transkei, the Ciskei, Venda and the rest will be with us a long while yet.

Business was ambivalent towards this process, adhering to the tacit compact reached at independence, that the English community

would be "left to make money, while the Afrikaners made politics". Some business men certainly saw South Africa's wealth as bound up in her political structure, a view reinforced by the chaos which seemed to accompany black rule to the north. Sampson cites the familiar involvement of foreign companies in local business, though he does not analyse this business or its relationship with the Afrikaner power structure, rooted in farming, the bureaucracy and the security forces. He therefore ignores the extent to which many Afrikaners, even the SANLAM corporation's Fred du Plessis, welcomed disinvestment as the final routing of the colonial enemy. He asserts either that foreign commerce definitely has propped up apartheid or that blacks think so. Winnie Mandela is quoted as affirming that "Botha retains his power because of business", as if that made it so.

We now run into trouble. Anthony Sampson is a long-time student of multinational business, yet he declines to grapple with the central question raised by his book: what really is the duty of a liberal business man in an undemocratic country? He complains that multinationals were "seduced by the apartheid government" and never tried to dissociate themselves from apartheid or to identify with black aspirations. But what did he want of them? All he says, often, is that they should have "made a more positive commitment". He lauds those industrialists who went north to see the ANC leader, Oliver Tambo, in Lusaka in 1986, though he does not report the criticism they received from internal black leaders on their return. (Many of these leaders regard the Lusaka group as 1950s has-beens, thoroughly penetrated by both Pretoria and Moscow while luxuriating in American foundation cash.)

The mighty Anglo-American Corporation, effective controller of 40 per cent of the Johannesburg stock market, has for decades openly financed the white anti-apartheid opposition, the Progressive Federal Party. Its boss, Harry Oppenheimer, shared with most of

the business community the view that apartheid was bad for business. Job reservation kept low-paid blacks out of certain work. Influx control impeded labour mobility and involved huge transport and recruitment costs. It also restricted black prosperity and therefore potential customers. Apartheid displayed all the evils of protectionism and socialism, not surprisingly since (whisper it not in British Labour circles) it had its roots firmly in the South African labour movement. Oppenheimer also took the view that apartheid was morally wrong. He may have disagreed with the ANC view of how a new South Africa should be run, but to lump Anglo and Ford and IBM and everyone else together under the heading of "capitalism-supports-apartheid" clouds the issue.

Although Sampson quotes in passing Merle Lipton's recent work on this subject, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (1985), his prejudgment requires him to ignore her message, that the business community (whatever its view of apartheid) has never in modern times enjoyed effective political power in South Africa. It has not been able to exercise the kind of leverage, by its presence let alone by its absence, that Sampson constantly implies. Until the growth of an Afrikaner stake in industry in the mid-1960s, Afrikaner nationalism was explicitly the movement of farmers and white trade unions against what the hard-liner, Jaap Marais, derided as "the big city money powers". Apartheid was the Afrikaners' chosen weapon of tribal survival, against economic and political liberalism as much as against black advance. As Lipton says, "The dominant capitalists in South Africa did not support Afrikaner nationalism; it thrived despite them. The new myth that Afrikaner nationalism was the creation of capital ignores their opposition to it."

Throughout the post-war period, international business involvement in South Africa has reflected secular trade and confidence cycles. It has sought a return on capital as and

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when conditions suited it. It fled after the Nationalist victory in 1948, poured in during the gold boom of the 1960s, left after Sharpeville, returned for the gold boom of the 1970s, left after the Soweto riots of 1976, returned and left again last year. Foreign investment and trade certainly imply the existence of a government able to maintain a reasonable economic stability. But we do not claim Midwestern farmers are supporting the KGB for selling grain to Russia. The reopening of trade with China is not seen as impeding the overthrow of the undemocratic Deng régime.

A business man reading this book will be understandably confused. In the 1970s, he was lapped by the American campaigner, the Revd Louis Sullivan, the EEC code and other observers to accept and foster black trade unions, to eliminate discrimination from his workplace, to defy job reservation and generally to aid black advance. Many business men – not only foreign ones – tried to do these things. There have been changes to apartheid, some as a result of business pressure, some in response to economic development which rendered most of economic apartheid unworkable.

Yet because the erosion of economic apartheid has not toppled the white power structure, the business man is accused of creating "system blacks", of being a "collaborationist" with each apartheid reform and so continuing to "profit from racism". He is next told he should disobey local laws and support the enemies of order. Then he is told that whether or not he does all this, by merely investing, employing and trading in South Africa, he is increasing general prosperity and thus aiding the government of the day. Instead, he should leave.

Getting foreign business to leave South Africa has proved a relatively simple operation. Sampson finds it "ironic that banks needed moralizing critics . . . to tell them where in fact their own long-term commercial interests lay". He graphically recounts the desperate efforts of multinationals to pour money into Soweto and desegregate their Eastern Cape toilets in advance of each annual general meeting in London or Manhattan. Yet this is not so much ironic as obvious. Organizations whose job is to make money can be brought to understand that their commercial interest may lie in a new direction. Companies such as IBM, Ford, Barclays, Shell were seldom convinced by lobbyists that they were morally wrong to do business in South Africa. Most of their executives, including passionate opponents of apartheid, believed they did more for the blacks by their presence than by their departure. It was shareholder democracy, not force of argument, that led them to pull out – or to substitute licensing and franchising for ownership. In going they achieved little more than a brief shudder of disquiet. To Botha, they were the enemy finally folding its tent.

Sampson makes great play of the most publicized instance of recent pressure on South Africa, the rand crisis of 1985, when South Africa was forced to stall on its debt repayments. International finance had, he says, "ended its collaboration with apartheid . . . and undermined South Africa's future more drastically than any government pressure". He offers no evidence for this statement. There was an immediate panic both on the exchanges and in the corridors of Pretoria, where financial trauma was a wholly novel experience. In the midst of the rand collapse, the governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Gerhard de Kock, threatened Botha with mortal doom if he failed to announce immediate political concessions to blacks. President Botha, economically illiterate, was at first jolted into taking his advice; but was promptly overruled by his cabinet.

In the event, rand devaluation wiped out the impact of the foreclosure. Mortal doom did not occur and de Kock – whose position makes him the crucial conduit of financial sanctions pressure – lost his credibility with the cabinet. The famed "effectiveness" of such sanctions lasted roughly three days. Most political observers in South Africa would argue that the crisis postponed rather than advanced apartheid reform. Since then, the much-vaunted alliance between overseas and domestic business and an emergent Afrikaner capitalism has been chiefly remarkable for the humiliating contempt with which Botha has felt able to treat it.

The evidence of the past decade in South

Africa suggests that Botha "reforms" apartheid only when two conditions obtain: when he feels under special pressure from internal black disorder (usually triggered by police brutality or, as in Soweto, administrative incompetence) and when he feels he can mobilize sufficient white consent for change. Foreign pressure serves neither purpose, indeed by raising false expectations of imminent upheaval it undermines black leadership, destroys hope and boosts white morale. "Another year and we're still here!" was the sarcastic boast of a recent Afrikaner headline.

There is no evidence that any impossible, external economic sanction can overthrow an entrenched oligarchy of the sort now ruling in

meaningful than a "targeted" bombing raid. It is a verbal device to pretend a destructive weapon is less arbitrary in its impact than we know it really is.

Worried by this, sanctions lobbyists in the United States are now speciously redefining "effective" sanctions to mean ones that can be implemented, not ones that achieve their political goal. This is tactics without strategy. All they can say, with Archbishop Tutu, is that the "onus must be on those who say no to sanctions, to provide us with a viable, non-violent strategy to force the dismantling of apartheid".

There is probably no such thing, though that does not justify the imposition of sanctions. The nearest to an answer was the policy known

apartheid crusade. Lusaka has seen no national Brigade ready to spill blood against the Afrikaner.

The moral high ground in southern Africa present must be granted not to Harvard graduates in Angola, however ramshackle, are genuinely confronting apartheid with their lives. They are not "killing Kruger with their mouths". If Sampson had spoken with the tactics of the tactics of ethnic survival he would have learnt, in no uncertain terms, that Russian supplies to Angola (most recently of Stas missiles and Mig strike aircraft) have caused them far more loss of sleep than any lost meetings at Chase Manhattan.

Sampson at times hints at the challenge South Africa does now present to modern liberalism: "not so much a real country, more a map of the mind on which anyone could find his own place". Yet no sooner do these thoughts occur to him than he takes refuge in the policy line of the ANC. That the old ANC and its domestic supporters in the United Democratic Front have come out for sanctions is certainly a testament to their self-sacrifice and deserves respect. It does not make the policy any more plausible, especially when, in this case, sanctions were at first so ardently proposed not by South Africa's internal black leaders but by outsiders. (I was once languished by Tutu to the effect that advocating sanctions was the ultimate liberal cop-out – shortly before he went to Washington and was told it was a quick ticket to liberation.) Even today, enthusiasm for sanctions is markedly greater among the Lusaka ANC than it is among the trade unionists and township leaders inside South Africa.

This is not surprising. The latter are the poor bloody infantry of Sampson's war. The price of the sanctions so far imposed (mostly on coal and scrap iron exports) is being paid not in black or white Johannesburg or Pretoria but in the blighted settlements of Bophuthatswana, the Ciskei and remittance-starved Mozambique. Every economic study of sanctions (and there are enough, surely, for Sampson to have discussed them) shows almost the entire penalty falling on unskilled workers, while the better off actually benefit from skill shortages, cheap labour and inflation. Sampson approvingly quotes the American lobbyist, Randall Robinson, that sanctions give "us as a people an immediate, direct, hands-on capability to bring about the downfall of apartheid. This is a cruel deceit, the more so when advanced from the comfortable drawing-rooms of Washington and London.

The onus of proof lies not on the opponents of sanctions but on the advocates. Where they are sincere in their "non-violence", their assumptions that the white power structure is vulnerable to what can only be a marginal shift in its terms of external trade – one that has largely already occurred. It also assumes that whites will feel it worth while voluntarily to barter their existing power base for a promise of continued prosperity. Yet few South Africans of any colour seriously suppose that ANC rule would bestow on South Africa some notional post-sanctions prosperity. The bargain is therefore a very poor one to white opponents. It becomes more so each year, given the record of black governments to the north.

A more realistic approach assumes that the profession of non-violence is insincere. The sanctions proponents must thus take a leaf out of Trotsky's book and will sufficient cheap to compel involuntary white submission. Further assumptions must then be made about the relative internal strengths of Afrikanerdom and the black majority, and their ability to resist and resist, an insurgency war. Sampson's long-standing and understandable affection for the ANC leader, Nelson Mandela, leads him to play down the fissiparous character of black nationalism. He also underestimates other black movements, industrial, tribal, and geographical.

He accepts the currently fashionable downgrading of Zulu Inkatha and the coloured and Indian parties, presumably because they are so often at odds with the ANC. Yet South Africa's largest and most cohesive political grouping, the Zulu, cannot be left out of the reckoning merely because its current leader, Chief Buthelezi, has become a somewhat eccentric figure.

Off the rails

T. C. Barker

T. R. GOURVISH

British Railways 1948-73: A business history 781pp. Cambridge University Press. £44. 0521264804

Railways have always been the cause of much grumbling because they are in constant public use; and the object of some state control because of their vast size and influence. At the same time, they used to stir feelings of patriotic admiration in the land of their creation. But that was before publicly controlled private enterprise gave place in Great Britain to state ownership, splendid but relatively inefficient steam to dreary but more efficient diesel – and profit to loss. British railways became unloved, even by prime ministers. The post-war period is certainly not the Age of the Train.

T. R. Gourvish has been set a difficult task: retreat and lack of success do not make the most absorbing reading. He nevertheless sets about this commissioned work with some enthusiasm and with even more honesty. Ministers – eleven of them in this twenty-five-year period – public officials and railway managers all come in for outspoken censure when the evidence warrants it. A senior railway executive, for instance, is quoted as being "a fussy and vain lightweight", a view confirmed by later experience. Another is "better remembered for his conviviality and love of the turf than for his management contribution". Extensive use has been made of surviving railway records, as well as of those of government at Cabinet, ministerial and personal level. Many of the participants have been interviewed. This vast wealth of material, collected with the aid of several research assistants, has been pulled together with great skill and clearly presented, often in the form of tables and graphs. The numerous illustrations include several very apt and amusing cartoons.

In his previous writings, Gourvish has concentrated on the managerial aspects of railway history. This stands him in very good stead, for British Rail's unequal struggle with rapidly spreading, and increasingly powerful, road transport was made even more difficult by the railways' inappropriate management structures and poor, inward (not to say backward) looking managers. From 1948 onwards it was clear that only the most able and energetic business leaders could devise and bring into effect a form of organization capable of reducing to current needs Britain's sprawling and run-down network, laid out in the pre-motor

Neo-apartheid may be brutal, but it need not be inherently unstable. Critics cannot both deride the Afrikaners as the "white tribe of Africa" and deny its ruling caste the staying power of dictatorial and one-party rulers to the north. As Giliomee and others constantly reiterate, these are not colonialists ready to beetle back to Heshmere at the first sign of trouble. Ironically, the chief threat to Botha has always been from the right, but Nationalism's vigorous internal democracy, much in evidence during the current election campaign, helps him resist that challenge as well.

Bobby Kennedy visited South Africa in 1966 and commented, as he flew back to Washington, "If I lived in this country I would gather up everything I have and get out now." Two decades later, his brother said the same. The impression of a comfortable northern liberalism rich enough to jet its scruples away from nasty questions stuck in the craw even of the most radical Africans. The outside world, which for so long had exploited Africa, proceeded to blight it with inefficient aid, unnecessary arms, inflationary loans, farm protectionism and fatuous advice.

Deciding what is best for Africa is an old and bad habit of English liberalism. Sampson would have been equally at home in Milner's kindergarten and the kitchen of Dickens's Mrs Jellyby. By granting South Africa independence before enforcing a full franchise, Britain may have some residual responsibility for apartheid, but not much. It certainly does not justify its embarking on the economic equivalent of another Boer War. The human sympathy we feel for those of all races now seeking to clear up the mess we left in Africa is ill-served by further punishing them.

Kurt M. Campbell, in *Soviet Policy towards South Africa* (223pp. Macmillan. £27.50; 0 333 39628 6), traces the history and limitations of Russian involvement in southern Africa since the Anglo-Boer War, with particular attention to black resistance, minerals and espionage.

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settecentesca
172pp. Naples: Sergio Civita. L98.000.

Twenty-seven kilometres north of Naples, on the Campanian plain, the vast eighteenth-century palace of the Neapolitan Bourbons still dominates the town of Caserta and its burgeoning industrial zone. Behind Vanvitelli's palatial complex a sweep of formal gardens undulates towards a far cascade, where, at a fountain dense with baroque statuary, Diana and her nymphs gracefully repel Actaeon. The ensemble of palace and grounds was completed in the early 1780s. At that time, too, at the urging of the British envoy at Naples, Sir William Hamilton, the Bourbon Queen Maria Carolina provided funds for the creation, adjacent to the fountain and within the palace grounds, of a small "informal" park of exotic plants and trees in the English style that had lately come into fashion.

The conception, landscaping, embellishment and history of these twenty-five "English" hectares form the subject of Carlo Knight's illuminating and beautiful book. The garden's recent restoration after generations of neglect, and its reopening in 1983, make this scholarly volume the more timely. Visitors to Caserta may still sense the expansive context depicted in Phillip Hackert's gouache of the "Giardino Inglese della Reggia di Caserta" - in which, within its arc of hills, the verdant plain rolls, like some mighty estuary, towards Vesuvius and the bay. Details from this gouache, with their characteristic Hackertian precision, have been ingeniously depicted by Signor Knight to illustrate his text.

Hamilton, visionary Parthenophile and a favourite at the Bourbon Court, secured the Queen's assurance of necessary funds. Writing to London, he asked his friend Sir Joseph Banks, then president of the Royal Society, to

suggest a suitable landscape architect. Banks's immediate choice fell on John Andrew Graef, German-born, English-trained. To expedite Graef's departure for Naples, Banks advanced him his passage money. In financial terms, this was never repaid; but Graef, after an uneasy beginning, amply rewarded his patrons by an inspired realization of their design.

At Caserta, the necessary space was enclosed (some of the acreage had been expropriated from its owners, resulting in decades of Italianate litigation). The soil proved remarkably fertile, the climate propitious. Graef and Hamilton were astonished by the rapid and prolific flourishing of trees and plants, many of them exotica. Greenhouses were constructed, and a "casino" that incorporated living quarters for Graef and his family. Artificial "ruins", in the classical taste of the day, made their appearance - including a decaying Ionic temple on an islet in an artificial lake, and a Doric "criptoportico" of particular charm. The king, Ferdinand IV, insisted on the creation of a maze - which was later destroyed, though its central Doric tempio remains. In the summer of 1793 Hamilton's Emma would record that the garden was a daily source of pleasure to the royal pair; and that "Sir William and me are there every morning at seven o'clock, sometimes dine there, and always drink tea there".

Outside the tranquil refuge of the garden, however, 1793 cast fateful shadows. In September of that year there arrived at Naples the British vessel Agamemnon, commanded by the thirty-five-year-old Horatio Nelson. On December 11, at Paris, Marie Antoinette, sister of the Queen of Naples, went to the guillotine - the trauma of this event intensifying, through its effect on Maria Carolina, the repressive reaction of the Neapolitan Bourbons to local repercussions from the French Revolution. The irruption of Napoleon into Italy was followed, at Naples, by the republican revolution of 1799; by the subsequent flight of the royal family; and by their vengeful return. Throughout these huge and terrible events the

"Giardino inglese" matured and prospered, outliving even those later decades when it became little more than a commercial nursery, supporting itself - like many of the overgrown gardens of the Ville Vesuviane today - by the sale of plants, fruit and vegetables. Knight, weaving his narrative through history, allows the garden and its gardeners their inspiring and symbolic triumph. In a moving conclusion he tells us that to write the "biography" of such a garden is to follow, as it were, the story of a protagonist "che non muore".

The book contains much previously unpublished material. Hamilton's letters to Banks concerning the garden provide a lively picture of life at the Bourbon court. (One misses, however, the "traduzione inglese" evidently attached by Hamilton to the Neapolitan verses he delightedly sent to Banks, in which a local "philosopher" celebrates the 1794 eruption of Vesuvius in scatological terms.) There are notes to Banks from Emma Hamilton. An interesting letter from Graef to Banks describing his voyage to Naples is apparently the only communication Graef ever sent his benefactor. Like many another "visitor" to Naples, Graef stayed on for life, succeeded at the garden by his two sons.

The contemporary illustrations, too, are often unfamiliar. (A discovery of flower sketches for Graef's projected volume on the flora of Capri may be the sole trace of that elusive undertaking.) Recent photographs of the restored garden handsomely complement

the text. An appendix lists the exotic plants imported for the garden, and includes a temporary topographical map.

It is thirty years since Harold Acton revealed to an English-speaking public the dramatic history of the Bourbon era at Naples, and twenty years since Brian Fothergill, in his much-cited biography, did elegant justice to the example and qualities of Sir William Hamilton. The fertile theme has stimulated innumerable place in the long tradition of Anglo-Italian scholarship. Recent months have seen his *intramontabile* Emma, and the equally haptotenue of their seemingly eternal living Carlo Knight is at his ease in every aspect of an ever-generous source to follow his lead. In the erudite series Napoli Nobilissima, only Roberto Pane, he has produced important monographs on the monuments and personalities of Bourbon rule. Among these writings published discovery, some years ago, of a long-observed entrance to the eighteenth-century excavation at the Villa dei Papi a Herculeum has made possible the *completa* exploration of that almost legendary site. *With Il Giardino Inglese di Caserta*, he also stylish and original chapter to a story that compasses - as Sir Harold reminds me in his graceful introduction - strong passions, big comedy, and bitter tragedy.

From bath to bed

Alexander Urquhart

STEPHEN LACEY
The Startling Jungle
253pp. Viking. £12.95.
0670 806145

ROGER TURNER
Better Garden Design
189pp. Dent. £12.95.
0460 047035.

Stephen Lacey's *The Startling Jungle* is the best kind of gardening book. It is both a handbook for practical gardening and a definition of a particular kind of garden. Lacey writes with passionate enthusiasm and looks at his subject from an original stance: he begins with a dream, a "garden picture" he calls it, which comes to him in full colour and usually when he is in the bath. He believes that all serious gardeners compose such pictures and rightly assumes that we need help to transfer them to the soil.

Three-quarters of the book is a seasonal consideration of the author's favourite plants and their uses, with special emphasis on colour and scent. At times Lacey's strong sense of himself as a Romantic leads him to indulge in somewhat tedious Classical-Romantic dogfights. "Classical gardeners will always start with shapes . . . Eventually, as they are making their list of plants they might spare a thought for colour and scent." The distinction that Lacey wants to make is one of motivation: the gardener who uses plants to fill a space as opposed to the gardener who uses spaces to house his beloved plants. But to see these two different approaches as Classical and Romantic is to hark back to gardening in the grand manner, which this book is essentially not about.

While Lacey eschews the obsessive orderliness that results in formality, his jungle is, as any artefact must be, ordered. In terms of selection and organization. His painterly concern with colours is directly in the tradition of Gertrude Jekyll, Jekyll and William Robinson are his models, and the updating of their creed, with the constraints of modern gardening in mind, forms the core of the book. Lacey, to his credit, does not allow dreams to blur the hard edges of the practical considerations of gardening in the 1980s. Limited space, the virtual disappearance of the hired gardener and a shortage of time conspire to make ambitious Jekyllian schemes impractical. The lessons are not, however, lost.

With admirable clarity and economy (qualities again to be found in his introduction to the

principles of the prismatic colour wheel and its colour-and-informality-movement back to cottage garden "which had been languishing in obscurity in the shadow of the Renaissance landscape traditions which swept the country"). He identifies the contributions of Robinson and Jekyll as "not to bring architectural cohesion to the cottage garden but to bring the cottager's wealth of plants and his natural informal ways of growing them to the gardeners of the larger country houses". Looking at gardening after Jekyll, Lacey finds her "high art" muted in a synthesis of the "wild profusion of the cottage garden" and the traditions of European gardening. At Hidcot and Sissingham he detects "the pattern of linked rooms" of the Moorish gardens of Spain and "the ease and vistas . . . of the gardens of classical France". In these two fine gardens, with their mixture of formality and wildness, he finds his ideal. So it is hard to understand why so much is made of Classical and Romantic distinctions.

The remaining and greater part of the book is for perusal, even for reference (as the index is good). Lacey's qualities as a plant-lover emerge, and among the very comprehensive lists most plant-lovers will find their passion for individual species shared. Overall, his "garden picture" is full of images, some gentle, some harmonious, others wild and thrilling, some dynamic, others static, some strange and exotic, others familiar and homely, some dramatic, others discreet, some vast and overwhelming, others minute and intriguing. It is admirably fulfilled.

Roger Turner's *Better Garden Design* exemplifies a more usual approach to gardening: that of treating design as a craft rather than as an art; it contains much sound advice on how to unravel the multidimensional complexities of making a garden. No doubt it will lead to the creation of tasteful gardens by many of its readers.

Charles Sinker has gathered together some of Hilda Murrell's natural history observations under the title, *Hilda Murrell's Nature Diaries 1961-1983* (224pp. Collins. £12.95. 000 41208 4). Miss Murrell was best known as a poet, a grower and an authority on old-fashioned flowers but in 1984 she became more widely known after her much publicized murder. The diary entries cover visits she made to Mallorca, South Wales and Ireland and descriptions of excursions from her home in Shropshire. She was an accomplished photographer and draughtswoman and the book is interspersed with many of her plant drawings and photographs.

Viewpoint: Research in the Humanities

Stefan Collini

Between them, Nietzsche and Morris Zapp provide much sound guidance through life, but it has to be said that there is one problem, at least, which finds them both a little wanting. They would neither of them wish me to affect the mask of impersonality, so let me state the problem in its frankly subjective form. I believe passionately in the value of those activities we call "the Humanities", yet when I see a compilation like the British Library's *Current Research in Britain* (1986): *The Humanities*, (386pp. £30. 0 7123 2031 8), I feel sick. I don't think this is just a matter of being hard to please or having a weak stomach. After all, when I hear the usual phrases in the annual addresses of Vice-Chancellors and College Presidents the world over - "deepening our understanding of ourselves and our history", "exploring the dimensions of human creativity", "the unfinishing pursuit of truth, the cultivation of humane judgment" - I find myself only mildly uneasy at the hyperbole, and indeed sometimes, if the provision of cheap white wine at the reception has been unusually abundant, something like a tear of regal pride wells up in the corner of my eye.

And yet when I go into the New Periodicals room of my university library I feel renewed reverence for that last librarian at Alexandria against whom the charge of arson is still pending. I know that this reaction, in particular, is ungracious to the point of bad faith. Over the years, I have been much instructed by what I have read in this room; I have sometimes come out with new respect for the way disciplined scholarship demands a range of human capacities, and at times even been abashed at the sheer quality of other people's work. Worse still, I have actually written the odd scholarly article myself, and I can't say I altogether regret it. Yet still the sight of those stoppably multiplying learned journals arouses in me some mixture of despair, shame and pyromania. At the very least I want to give a false name at the desk, and write rude words across the cover of the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*.

Now, Nietzsche and Morris Zapp do let one down a bit at this point. Not that the young Professor of Classical Philology at Basel didn't come to feel what was obviously a rather similar unease. It surely underlay his tirades against the industrious *Gelehrte* of his day: they had lost sight of the point of their activity, but "the habit of scholarship continues without it, and rotates in egoistic self-satisfaction around its own axis". The omnivorous scholar "often sinks so low that in the end he is content to gobble down any food whatever, even the dust of bibliographical minutiae". That's possibly a bit frank; perhaps there's something more judicious in his later work? "The proficiency of our finest scholars, their heedless industry" - yes, this sounds more like it - "their heads smoking day and night, their very craftsmanship: how often the real meaning of all this lies in the desire to keep something hidden from oneself. . . scholarship today is a hiding place for every kind of discontent, disbelief, gnawing worm, *despectio sui*, bad conscience". Probably best to leave that bit out of the submission to the University Grants Committee.

David Lodge's Morris Zapp, even before he took up jogging, was rather more deeply implicated in the trends of his time, and had not become a full Professor at Euphoria State on account of a squeamish aversion to increasing the printers' work-load. His heart, of course, was in the right place, and he always had a proper concern for the positioning of other, more important, organs; yet even I find his proposed resolution of the existential dilemma we both share a little drastic. He planned, you will recall, a series of commentaries on the works of Jane Austen, and eventually upon every author in the canon, which would be "utterly exhaustive", leaving "simply nothing further to say". "The object of the exercise, as I had often to explain with as much patience as I could muster, was not to enhance others' enjoyment and understanding of Jane Austen, still less to honour the novels; rather, but to put a definitive stop to the production of any

further garbage on the subject . . . After Zapp, the rest would be silence."

In both these responses, the baby/bath-water ratio seems a touch high. And yet there surely is a real issue here which is not yet to be dissolved by references to an over-fastidious sensibility about the inevitable gap between ideal and reality or to the complacent ladder-kicking-away behaviour of the middle-aged and tenured. There is something wrong with our present practice of "Research in the Humanities". Or rather - since there is not just one form of that practice and "we" are a diverse lot - much of what is done under this rubric, and perhaps even more of what is said about what is or should be done, sends the mind reaching for terms like "incongruous" and "misconceived". Since this may not be a popular thing to say, or, far worse, may risk being popular in the wrong quarter, let me try first to dispel some possible misunderstandings.

First of all, I am not suggesting that people engaged in the cultivation of the Humanities (who are for the most part supported by institutions of higher education) shouldn't write things. Writing is an essential part of their activity, though more writing and less publishing may be a quite intelligible, even possibly healthy, state of affairs. Secondly, I do not think "more means worse". More means more, and I would have thought that it was undeniable that there was more good stuff as well as bad stuff written in these fields now than there was thirty years ago or even, in so far as the comparison can be made at all, 130 years ago. My response is not, I think, that of the late Roman patrician surveying the barbarians within the gates, which is so often disguised as the "more means worse" or "back to standards" argument (if it can be called an argument).

Nor, thirdly, are most of the topics written about in themselves trivial or pointless. Attempts to define *in advance* what is going to prove to be important or to have "point" nearly always end up being made to look silly by the unpredictable winds of intellectual change. An interest in Hegel would have seemed like an ostensive definition of a dead end in English-speaking philosophy thirty years ago, and intellectual history is full of examples of how pronouncements that a certain topic was exhausted were shortly followed by a period of unprecedentedly creative work on it. It is true that a special version of the general problem of diminishing returns applies to intellectual inquiry, but in practice (for reasons I'll try to spell out in a moment) this so often seems to come down to the quality of the work being done, not the quantity of previous work in the area. It is true that second-rate work on a new topic (especially if it requires a good deal of empirical legwork) may seem easier to justify than second-rate work on an old topic, but first-rate work on either embodies its own justification, and in effect changes the topic as well.

None the less, some disquiet may be a legitimate response to the conception of "Research in the Humanities" underlying the British Library's compilation. The main reason for this, surely, is that the sense of "research" that is implied may not be altogether appropriate here. That sense is the one borrowed from the natural sciences, where research is usually thought of (wrongly, according to many philosophers and historians of science, and, indeed, to many practising scientists as well) as a matter of "pushing back the frontiers of knowledge". (This sense of the term brings slow-aways with it: each "research project" in the British Library listing is given under the name of "the principal investigator".) But however far that description may be appropriate to the life of the lab, the not entirely dead metaphor it contains looks very unhappy in its new surroundings. "Frontiers" here suggests that "knowledge" is to be seen in geopolitical terms as an expanding imperial state; what is inside the "frontiers" is a secure possession, and the direction of advance is simply given by the life of the land. "State-of-the-Art research" is just the West Coast version of the old policy of *Drang nach Wahrheit*: knowledge takes no prisoners, the compass provides all the justification needed, and there's no doubt where the frontiers lie. "Research" in the Humanities, however, is not a matter of pushing back the frontiers, but of

Morevoer, "knowledge" itself is surely less

than ideal as a description of what we're after. The contrast with "understanding" indicates a lot of what it leaves out or misrepresents, and even a term like "cultivation" has a claim here, or would do had it not come to be so closely associated with images of affected connoisseurship and simple snobbery. "Knowledge" is too easily thought of as accumulated stock: it doesn't need to be discovered again, and it's there for anyone who wants to use it. But "understanding" underlines that it's a human activity, and so is inseparable from the people who do it. Notoriously, the possibilities of extending our understanding depend not just on what we already understand, but also on what sorts of people we have become.

Now, I don't pretend that it's easy to see what follows from this thought for the question of "Research in the Humanities", but giving it more salience in our reflections could at least make it harder for the language of Productivity-Speak to carry all before it. It can alert us, for example, to the overvaluation of a particularly narrow conception of "novelty" that is commonly involved. In Prodspeak, the publication of one's "new findings" is the only acceptable outcome of "research". It is true, of course, that there are large areas of the Humanities where reporting on "new findings" may seem a perfectly proper description for part of the activity - the unearthing of new sources is an obvious form of this. But for the most part, something more like "nurturing, animating, revising, and extending our understanding" would seem nearer the mark, and here it is harder to isolate the "new findings".

The truth is that there is often work by our predecessors which it may be right neither simply to repeat (even were that strictly possible) nor to repudiate and replace with something else. The proper response may be to acknowledge it, possess it, learn from it and allow it to inform our understanding. One trouble with this way of putting it is that it may seem vulnerable to the charges of rigidity and passivity: any suggestion of merely handing on our cultural inheritance makes us seem like rather indolent museum curators - and socially and culturally conservative ones, too, who are sure that everything worth preserving is already in the collection. But this is a misconception of what this kind of understanding involves. For each generation to repossess a cultural inheritance, in the fullest and not merely the bailiiff's sense of that verb, is to modify and extend it. Apart from anything else, our understanding has to be different from that of previous generations just because it is ours: we fit it into the framework of other things we understand, we articulate it with our other concerns (which are far from purely intellectual), and we restate it in our idiom and for our audience. The Humanities, it has been well said, are inherently "conversational" subjects (which is one reason why the close connection with teaching is not simply a historical contingency), and conversing, unlike activities as different as haranguing or cataloguing, requires a constant, flexible, responsiveness.

Moreover, it can take a great deal of time and effort for any one individual just to get to the point where a genuine and imaginatively effective understanding of, say, Kant's philosophy or the legal arrangements of medieval England is possible. But during that time, and indeed even once there, our "principal investigator" may not have any "new findings" to publish, though a prolonged meditation on such topics, combined with wide reading in other fields and reflection on a variety of experience, may eventually issue in something very well worth having, even if not something that Prodspeak would call new.

This may take quite some time, but meanwhile there are, as we know, very strong economic and existential pressures on "researchers" in the Humanities to come up with some-

thing new *fast*. This gives an important role to what can properly be called intellectual fashion, which speeds up the business of slaying the fathers (and mothers) no end. New sausage-machines turn out different-looking sausages and plenty of 'em. Fashion and Prodspeak are mutually supportive.

The general point I am trying to make here is a very old one, and not in the least original to me. But, of course, it is part of the point itself that we do need to repossess such old truths and understand and state them anew in new circumstances. Some of those circumstances are very obvious, like the enormous expansion of higher education in this and many other countries in recent decades which, for Malthusian reasons, may have forced later arrivals to attempt to extract fresh yields from marginal or unfertile plots. There are also less tangible circumstances, like the way in which public debate in modern liberal democracies has come to combine utilitarian valuations with a distrust of procedures that are not mechanically universalizable. It is a curious feature of such debate that where "understanding", and still more "cultivation", can be pilloried as "elitist", "research" retains an open and ostensibly democratic character: the stock of "knowledge" is accessible to all, and anyone can replicate the experiment (give or take a few IQ points and several years' "training"). "Results" are seen as something objective, and so the role of the exercise of judgment is usurped by the kind of totting-up of "items published" that can be made intelligible to the average accountant-in-the-street.

Any suggestion of resisting this slide into an inappropriately utilitarian vocabulary is likely to look quixotic, and at times downright suicidal. But in fact, simply colluding with Prodspeak may be more fatal still, because our contribution to the GNP is, as Morris Zapp would remind us, "zilch". We don't best defend our activities by dressing them up as something they're not: the Humanities, as those Vice-Chancellors' addresses imply, are essential to our society's understanding of itself, but degrees of success in furthering an aim of this kind can only be measured qualitatively.

And this general point is connected, albeit rather deviously, with the unsteadiness of my response to the Sorcerer's Apprentice nightmare of the New Periodicals room. The more we talk the language of Prodspeak the more we have to live by it. Moreover, and more insidiously, the more we let it become the only acceptable justificatory language, the more it shapes and partly constitutes our own individual senses of identity. Shall we, for example, become unable to accommodate the thought that there may be more admirable qualities displayed in the decision *not* to publish the outcome of some extended rumination than to turn it into another "item" for the annual listing?

Meanwhile, those sodding forms keep coming round asking us "principal investigators" what our current "research projects" are, and forms have a way of imposing their own categories. I suppose it is, alas, unlikely that next year's list will contain entries like "Brooding on Wittgenstein" or "Trying to Get the French Revolution Straight". And here again neither Nietzsche nor Morris Zapp provides a very helpful model. I don't imagine Nietzsche was much of a one for filling in such forms, though if he had I would have liked to have seen the British Library's computer trying to decide how to classify "Self-Overcoming". I suppose Zapp, more of an adept at the jargon, might try to get away with "Towards a General Theory of Gender Interaction: Some Comparative Findings". And me? Well, one year, in Mittyish protest, I'm going to put down "Rereading the Complete Works of Henry James with Special Reference to Getting to the End of *The Golden Bowl* This Time".

Playwrights with a love of the pseudonym will welcome the decision to stage another Mobil Playwriting Competition for the Royal Exchange Theatre Company in Manchester. The competition is open to entries from anywhere in the world but they must be original, full-length plays written in English, and not previously produced or offered for production in any medium. The plays must be entered under a pseudonym and accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the author's real

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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

The argument about religious teaching in American public schools has become several times more bizarre since I last wrote about it, (American notes, November 14, 1986). On March 4 this year, a United States District Court Judge in Mobile, Alabama ruled in favour of a lawsuit brought against the authorities by fundamentalist Christian parents. At one level, this was merely the standard lawsuit protesting against the "godless" content and characters of certain teaching materials. But the plaintiffs also made a further assertion. They asked the judge to rule that the public schools were teaching religion, and thus violating the First Amendment to the Constitution. The "religion" in question is what the fundamentalists call "secular humanism". In finding for the plaintiffs, Judge Brevard Hand actually ruled that secular humanism is a religion. This means that forty-four major textbooks have had to be withdrawn from the curriculum. It also means that in the bicentennial year of the American Constitution, the Supreme Court will have to decide whether such ideas as agnosticism, evolution and secularism constitute a religious belief.

This is a tribute to the persistence (and the large financial resources) of the Christian literalists, who have brought almost fifty similar suits in states as diverse as New York and Nebraska. John Buchanan, a Southern Baptist minister and former Republican Congressman from Alabama, has called the verdict "judicial book-burning". Most legal and academic authorities seem to agree with him, and pressure is mounting to get Judge Hand's ruling overturned. One wants to side with enlightened opinion in this case, and I do, except for one thing.

As matters now stand (or as they stood before the Mobile judgment) I am going to have to teach my son the Bible in my, and his, spare

time. He will have to learn it, because otherwise he will be unable to read Shakespeare, Milton or Dickens with pleasure and comprehension. And at the present time, no school will even risk teaching the Bible as literature. It is often extremely difficult, when writing an article or when giving a talk to college students, to make the simplest biblical allusion and have it understood. It is this state of affairs, in part, which has given the energy to the fundamentalist parents. For example, many school history texts begin the American story with the arrival of the Mayflower. But they nervously omit the religious motivations of the Pilgrim Fathers. This is doubly unsatisfactory, because it means no mention of the religious persecution from which the Pilgrim Fathers fled, and no mention of the religious persecution which they later inflicted. To call this "secularism" is to mistake it for an insipid neutrality. It must also, incidentally, make the teaching of history and of philosophy much more arduous. The most widely remarked educational and cultural problem in America is the lack of a common cultural and literary tradition.

The fundamentalists, of course, are not interested in solving that problem. They do not argue for the study of the Bible, but for its inculcation, and for its inculcation as revealed white Protestant truth at that. That is why the Macmillan *History of a Free People* is now a banned textbook and why six Rand McNally introductions have joined it on the index. It is also why a film of *Romeo and Juliet* has been condemned for "secular humanism". One of the leaders of the parents' censorship movement, the Revd Tim LaHaye, has written that "the Renaissance obsession with nude 'art forms' was the forerunner of the modern humanists' demand for pornography in the name of freedom". People like LaHaye are obviously unappeasable, but this does not, or need not, mean that "secular humanists" should defend schoolbooks that are mediocre, bloodless and ahistorical. It is self-evidently absurd

that Bible study should be entrusted to a teacher like myself.

A few years ago, in the pages of the *Nation* and then of the *New Republic*, there began an anonymous series called "Belles Lettres". This fictional serial described the working day at a literary magazine, and was replete with up-to-the-minute intellectual and academic politics. All the names, except those of the staff of *Belles Lettres*, were real. It did not take long to discern the lineaments of the *New York Times Book Review*. But who was "Frank Rich", the mordant fly on the office partition wall? Speculation became intense when one of the serials included a paragraph from the as yet unpublished *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer. The following discussion about who should review the novel ensued among the "editors", with chief editor Jonathan Margin asking:

"Well, do you have any suggestions for the review, Ed?"

"I think Joyce Carol would know what to make of it," he said.

"She has a high shit threshold, but not high enough," Barry said.

"Speak up! Speak up!" Virginia said.

"Joyce Carol Oates does not have a high enough shit threshold to review Norman Mailer's new novel," Barry said loudly.

"Well, then we don't want her," Virginia said.

"Any other suggestions?" Mr Margin said, throwing the matter open for general discussion.

It was hard to catch who said what, but some of the offerings went like this:

"How about one of those Columbia trochees, like Morris Dickstein?"

"Flaccid," someone said.

"Perhaps someone of more... stature," Mr Margin said.

"Stephen Marcus?" someone said.

"Flaccid," was heard again.

"V. S. Pritchett," someone said.

"He wouldn't do it."

"Sure he would. It's Norman Mailer."

"I think we should stay in America," Mr Margin said.

"Ben DeMott would be thrilled to do it, and he's soft touch."

Not long after the appearance of this spoof came a long review of *Ancient Evenings* by Benjamin DeMott on the front of the *New York Times Book Review*. Though generally favourable, it contained some paragraphs of deprecation which some thought did not fit with the general thrust of the review. Until then I had been certain that Frank Rich was Wilfred Sheed, whose *Office Politics* had been the peak attained by this genre. But Mailer began prowling parties in Manhattan saying "Where's Charlie Simmons? Tell him I'm looking for him." And who was Charlie Simmons? A veteran editor at the *New York Times Book Review*. And now it can be told. The *Belles Lettres* Papers will fall from the press of William Morrow later this spring, with the name Frank Rich nowhere to be seen. Mr Simmons has come clean, and has left the employ of the *Times*. Speculation now takes the form of imaginary dialogues in the offices of the *Book Review*, discussing who should review *Belles Lettres* or whether, indeed, it deserves a review at all. . . .

The history of hype is always older than we think. During the Mexican revolution, Pacheco Villa signed a contract with the Mutual Film Corporation which gave that company exclusive rights to film his campaign. One clause stipulated that Villa would carry out his daring raids in daylight hours and re-enact any scenes of combat which were unsatisfactory from a cinematic point of view. I learned this from a new journal published by the Library of Congress entitled *Performing Arts Annual*, which has an article by Aurelio de los Reyes that draws on the Library's vast collection of performing arts material. The *Annual* costs \$11 and may be had from the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Brian Alderson was asked to value the Ople Collection by the organizers of the Appeal.
- Gillian Avery's books include *Childhood Patterns: A study of heroes and heroines of children's fiction 1770-1950*, 1975.
- T. C. Barker is Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics.
- Geoffrey Best's most recent book is *Honour Among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea*, 1983.
- Brian Bond is Professor of War Studies at King's College, London.
- Malcolm Bowie's *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as fiction* has just been published.
- Keth Brown teaches English at the University of Oslo.
- Alan Brownjohn's new volume of poems, *The Old Flea-Pit*, is published this month.
- Frances Cairncross is Britain Editor of the *Economist*.
- Stefan Collini is the author (with Donald Winch and John Burrow) of *That Noble Science of Politics: A study in nineteenth-century intellectual history*, 1983.
- Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen in the Penguin Lives of Modern Women series was published last year.
- Katherine Duncan-Jones's World Classics edition of Sidney's *Old Arcadia* was published in 1985.
- D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* was published last year.
- Garth Fowden is the author of *The Egyptian Hermes: A historical approach to the late pagan mind*, 1986.
- Sir David Fraser's *Alanbrooke* was published in 1982.
- Robert Gibson is Master of Rutherford College, University of Kent. His *Studies in French Fiction and Aesthetics* are about to be published.
- Christopher Hitchens is the Washington columnist of the *Nation*.
- Simon Jenkins's book, *The Market for Glory*, appeared last year.
- Blake Morrison is Literary Editor of the *Observer*. His new book, *The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper and other poems*, will be published this spring.
- Heather O'Donoghue is a Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford.
- Roy Porter is a lecturer at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London. His most recent book is *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1982.
- David Pryce-Jones is the author of *Paris in the Third Reich*, 1981.
- Frederic Raphael's most recent collection of stories, *Think of England*, was published last year.
- David Reynolds is a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and the author of *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-41*, 1981.
- Stephen Romer's first collection of poems, *Idols*, was published last year.
- Christopher Rowe is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Bristol. His commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* was published last year.
- Malcolm Schofield is the co-editor of *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic ethics*, 1986.
- Francis Steegmuller is translating, with Barbara Bray, the correspondence between Flaubert and George Sand.
- George Satrien's most recent book of poems is *The Photographer in Winter*, 1986. Some of his verses for children are included in the second volume of *Meet and Write*, which is about to be published.
- Geoffrey Trease's next book for children, *Tomorrow is a Stranger*, will appear in May.
- Keth Walker's *John Dryden* in the Oxford Authors series has recently been published.

The Seventh Annual Writers' Conference at the University of Southampton will take place on Saturday, April 25. Among the authors invited to lecture are P. D. James, Christopher Reid, Philip Ziegler and Alison Fell. Representatives from publishers including Faber, Griffin Books and Penguin will be available to discuss manuscripts. The names of the winners of eight competitions, including the TVS-sponsored award for the best television play, will be announced at the Writers' Dinner - guest speaker Beryl Bainbridge. Further information can be obtained from Margaret Barraclough, Adult Education Department, University of Southampton, Southampton SO9 1NN. Telephone 0703 559122.

Letters

Government and Education

Sir, - George Walden (Letters, March 27) tells a beguiling tale of failure, dissimulation and bad faith, of academics' inertia and of universities' refusal to see their own fundamental flaws, or to admit them when they were at last laid bare; but also of dauntless government action, clear-sighted, painful, yet essentially constructive - and now, already, largely successful. So much so that the wisdom of the New Way is being recognized by universities themselves; if not publicly, then at least by sundry clerks who "speak the unspeakable in the privacy of the cloister".

The reality behind this heroic fable is rather different. What happened to British universities was a crude consequence of dogmas about public expenditure. This had to be reduced for reduction's sake, whatever the object of expenditure, and whatever the effects. Of policy in any subtler sense there was no sign. Sir Keith Joseph, in his simple way, made no pretence: more could not be afforded, nor should it be until we were better off - higher education being more of a luxury expenditure than an investment. If new ministers now claim strategic intentions, it is a case of the "seamless cloak of continuity" which (Mr Walden tells us himself) governments use for their own dissimulations.

So it will not do for government to claim it has achieved a planned reform. The UGC in 1981, faced with an invidious task and an immediate deadline, mounted a crash course in decline, which has been running ever since. Institutions have responded as best they could. It will not do for government to take credit for such survivals and adaptations as have been improvised, while ignoring the destructions of which no sense at all can be made. It will not do to preach an egalitarian sermon and tell glowingly of a polytechnic-led expansion, as if this had been designed: when students could not find places in reduced university departments, they went to polytechnics, which have coped with the influx despite minimal encouragement, cuts of their own, and a sharply worsened student-teacher ratio. And it certainly will not do (though somebody will no doubt try it) to present the increasingly desperate hackings and joinings I pointed to in the University of London (TLS, March 13) as if they were all part of some teleological path to perfection.

To object to such proceedings is not to argue against reform and innovation: all institutions can be improved. But their proper reform needs prior reflection, not emergency measures at pistol-point. Walden makes it too easy for himself by attacking a naive conservatism no one was defending, or by claiming that we seek to "avoid judgments of value" in the arts (we would like them properly founded on evidence and argument) or by suggesting that universities ever expected "to stand fastidiously to one side" of the national economy. It is too easy to make vague accusations, but also claim - so as to give the right triumphant feeling - that the faults are well on the way to being cured; so the concrete evidence of what was wrong need not now be gone into. It is too easy to pose as a benign investor in higher education by putting back belatedly this year a part of what has been steadily lost since 1981 (out of which, incidentally, the new pay structure separately boasted of will have to be partly financed, with consequent loss of posts and to the detriment of other purposes). And it is much too easy to claim a "widespread, if useful, endorsement" of the Government's "principles" which, being uttered "in camera", is uncheckable. No one I know of has stumbled upon these clandestine penitents; the dominant attitude in our not very political profession seems to me still a rejection of the Government and all its works.

George Walden suggests that any other party in power would behave much the same as his. I feel fairly sure that most of us would welcome the chance to climb back into a friendlier frying-pan.

T. J. REED,
St John's College, Oxford.

Sir, - I read with interest in George Walden's long letter about his government's record

in higher education (March 27), his remarks about the "brain-drain", a phenomenon which he seems to find somewhat puzzling, and seeks to explain in terms of the attractions of the American system, notably a lower top rate of tax and a more flexible structure for pay and promotion, rather than the disincentives for academics and scientists to remain in Britain. He may have visited over forty universities in the past year, but has he asked any of those who have gone down the "drain" why they did so? Naturally, upon arrival in the United States, British academics do discover some of the advantages he mentioned; but I would contest his assertion that they leave because of them. Salaries and the promotion structure in British universities are quite irrelevant to those at the beginning of their careers, like myself, who have had virtually no posts to apply for; they are not leaving for a better career, but to have a career at all. Moreover, their elders leave not for "a livelier intellectual climate", as Mr Walden alleges, but for a climate with some warmth or hope in it. It is thoroughly demoralizing to see position after position left empty upon the retirement of the incumbent (the distinguished chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek at Oxford is but the latest example). It is to say the least disagreeable for established academics to feel that they may be in the dying stages of a long and glorious tradition of learning and research. Money is not the main factor: though American salaries may sound high, so is the cost of living. What the Government has taken away is more basic - hope, and the expectation of continuity.

Walden even has the effrontery to speak of the recent 24 per cent pay increase negotiated with the AUE, when we all know that this is to be paid for by the halting of all new scientific research. I am not a scientist, nor indeed unsuccessful in my new life in America; but it is this latest absurdity that has impelled me to speak out, after too long a silence, against this government's blunderbuss approach to higher education. No doubt some reforms, perhaps in the American direction, were indicated; these are not reforms, but a massacre. It is an old story: *desertum faciunt, pacem vocant*.

RICHARD JANKO,
Department of Classics, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027.

Rousseau and Violence

Sir, - In John Hope Mason's review (February 27) of Carol Blum's book, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The language of politics in the French Revolution* he does not seem to be aware of the existence of certain intensely argued issues in current scholarship that Blum is addressing. One such scotoma is especially unfortunate. Mason states that Rousseau "was utterly opposed to the use of force or violence as a means of bringing about change. No one who has examined the views he expressed about the one political situation in which he was actually involved (in Geneva) can have any doubts about these issues." One would hardly imagine from Mason's assertion that the question of violence is one of the most hotly debated aspects of modern Rousseau scholarship. As Blum points out: "violent and destructive utterances... punctuate all his works, from Fabricius' exhortations to 'burn, smash and destroy,' to his recommendations of the death penalty for anyone wishing to leave the African nation, or behaving so as to belie the civic religion in the *Contrat social*, to his description of mass murder vengeance in the *Léviathe* (p131). Numerous studies have dealt with the rage of Rousseau, including Michèle Ansart-Dourlen's *Dénonciation et violence dans la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1975) and Jan Marejko's *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la dérive totalitaire* (1984). At the same time, in our not very political profession seems to me still a rejection of the Government and all its works.

While Mason is not obliged to accept the construction Blum puts on this Rousseauvian Thanatos and its consequences among certain leaders of the Revolution, he ought to have described it in his review, since it is a central argument in her book.

OTIS FELLOWS,
University of Southampton, Southampton, New York, New York 10027.

'Epistemology and Cognition'

Sir, - Reading David Papineau's review of Alvin I. Goldman's *Epistemology and Cognition* (March 3), I was struck that the mistake made by the majority to whom the feminist bank-teller probability question was put is not unlike some of Piaget's findings in his experimental work on child development. Piaget would confront a young child with model cows, say seven red and four white, and then ask whether there were more red cows than cows. It wasn't till they were eight or nine years old that children got this consistently right, and Piaget thought this showed that younger children could not properly distinguish a class from its constituents, a kind of category mistake.

More recent work, however, suggests that the children were more commonsensical that Piaget gave them credit for. No one in his or her senses would need to ask if there were more red cows than cows and what the questioner must mean is: are there more red cows than white ones? So with the feminist bank-teller. Respondents were only given two alternatives for this sociologically conscious young female: which is more probable, (a) Linda is a bank-teller; or (b) Linda is a bank-teller and active in the feminist movement? Unless one is alert to this kind of problem or riddle one assumes that Linda has got to be a bank-teller in either case as there is no third choice, and therefore any sensible question must be about something else. This would explain why so many of those asked, given the other information, plumped for (b) as being more probable. In common parlance (a) would not be probable: it's certain.

ROBIN MINNEY,
Horn's House, Winton Gilbert, Durham.

'To the Land of the Reeds'

Sir, - I. M. Bruce makes a good point in his letter (March 20) about my review of Aharon Appelfeld's *To the Land of the Reeds*. It probably would be an idea to indicate in the heading what language a book is translated from, along with the name of the translator.

Translators are grossly underpaid and exploited. My practice when reviewing a book in translation is, if the book reads particularly well in English, to say so clearly, and this I have done in the past about Darya Bilu's translation of Appelfeld's earlier novels. Where the translation seems clumsy or inept I feel I can only comment if I know the original language and have the original to hand, which was not the case with Jeffrey Green's translation of *To the Land of the Reeds*. I therefore made no comment.

Why an author should drop an excellent translator is anybody's guess, but this may have been a publisher's decision, or perhaps even the translator's. It does demonstrate, though, how much our response to foreign writers depends on their being provided with good translators, which presumably means on publishers being willing to pay translators a decent fee.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI,
60 Prince Edward's Road, Lewes, Sussex.

Edward Young

Sir, - In his review of Harold Forster's new biography, *Edward Young: The poet of the Night Thoughts, 1683-1765* (March 20), Pat Rogers asserts that Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* "do not (on a cursory check) use the noun *originality*", but that Young's entry in *Biographia Dramatica* (1782), along with some usages in Reynolds's *Discourses*, "advances the appearance of a crucial term some years before OED traced it. In Hawkins's life of Johnson (1787)". In fact, the noun *originality* offers a classic instance of OED's first dating being nearly half a century late. On May 24, 1742, Thomas Gray, in a letter to John Chute, praised a pamphlet by Lady Catherine Hyde, Duchess of Queensberry, for its "Spirit and Originality". Pace Professor Rogers, Young's *Conjectures* (1759) do use the noun. On the contrary, an original, though but indifferent (its originally being set

aside), yet has something to boast." In the 1760s, the word became quite common, appearing for example in the title of a work by Edward Capell, *Reflections on Originality in Authors* (1766). OED also gives a late first date (1766) for the other sense of *originality*, "authenticity" or "genuineness": this, too, occurs in 1742, in a remark about a painting in a letter of July 14 from Horace Walpole to Horace Mann.

Young's *Conjectures* are often considered to be seminal in the history of conceptions of originality and genius. Dr Johnson thought differently, to judge from a remark recorded by Boswell in *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (entry for Thursday, September 30): "he was surprised to find Young receive as novelties what he thought very common maxims". This perhaps corroborates the thesis of Pat Rogers's review, that Young was not the original for which Harold Forster takes him.

JONATHAN BATE,
Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

The 'South Bank Show' and V. S. Naipaul

Sir, - Mervyn Bragg is to be congratulated on the frankness and vigour with which he defends his use of "easy formulas" in the *South Bank Show* programme on V. S. Naipaul (Letters, March 20). His letter is a valuable contribution to the "discussion about television and books" to which he himself refers. But how familiar it all is.

Mr Bragg's television programme is not called the *South Bank Show* for nothing. A show is an entertainment; and Bragg, like everyone else in television, is in the entertainment business. An entertainer to his fingertips, Bragg well knows how to attract an audience's attention: "the notion that Naipaul's career has been a 'voyage of self-discovery' is useful". Of course it is. He also knows how to hold the audience's attention, how to keep it entertained. You simply give the audience what it wants. And so: "clichés are adopted precisely because of their helpful familiarity".

This is not a quarrel about the value of "clichés" and "easy formulas" (I'm sure "the evidence" does suggest that "it works"). The clichés are merely being used as a means to an end. But the end, for Bragg, seems to be the presentation through television of a world of "helpful familiarity".

Who gains when everything - even the life and work of V. S. Naipaul - is presented to us on television in terms of its "helpful familiarity"? After all, we read Naipaul precisely because he looks at the world, the familiar world, and makes it seem strange and new to us. It is the very unfamiliarity of the world we encounter in Naipaul's books that is so "helpful" to us. But that's not entertainment. And it's not, sadly, television as we now have it.

GAVIN SCOTT,
50 Bow Road, London E3.

'The Crows of Shakespeare'

Sir, - I was delighted to see my eccentric and talented great-great-uncle mentioned in Eric Korn's witty "Reminders" (March 20), but sad that he got her first name wrong. This was Jermina, not Jane. She was married to Hugh Blackburn, a professor of mathematics at Glasgow University; and, as a Wedderburn by birth, would have considered herself upper-class.

DIANA FARR,
35 Esmond Road, Bedford Park, Chiswick, London W4.

In "Among this week's contributors" in the TLS of March 13 Alan Borg was incorrectly described as Keeper of the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, a position he relinquished to become Director of the Imperial War Museum.

The first edition of Robert Garioch's *Collected Poems* was published in Edinburgh by Macdonald in 1977, not, as was stated in the TLS notice of *Lines Review* (March 13), by Carcanet, which published the second edition in 1980.

Competition No 323
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 24. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 323" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on May 1.

1 Last year I was walking down Putney Hill, and I saw Swinburne for the first and last time. I could see nothing but his face and head. I did not notice those ridiculously short trousers that Putney people invariably mention when mentioning Swinburne.

2 Nor had I any illusions about Algernon Charles Swinburne, who often used to stop my perambulator when he met it on Nurses' Walk, at the edge of Wimbledon Common, and put me on the head and kiss me: he was an inveterate pram-stopper and pitter and kisser.

3 "I well remember, when I first went to Eton, the head-boy called us together, and pointing to a little fellow with a mass of curly red hair, said, 'If ever you see that boy, kick him - and if you are too far off to kick him, throw a stone - ... He was a fellow named Swinburne,'" he said. "He used to write poetry for a time, I believe, but I don't know what became of him."

Competition No 318
Winner: Michael West
Answers:
1 Grasshoppers go in many a thrumming spring And now to stalks of tasselled sour-grass climb. That shakes and sways awhile, but still keeps straight, While arching oxeye doubles with its weight. John Clare, "Grasshoppers".

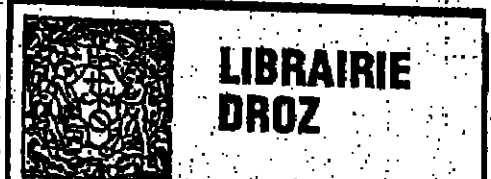
2 That is the grasshopper's - he takes the lead In summer luxury, - he has never done With his delights: for when tired out with fun He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed. John Keats, "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket".

3 Because a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

Competition No 319
Winner: J. A. Gore
Answers:
1 The train The twelve o'clock for paradise. Hurry, or it will try to creep away. Out in the country everyone is wise. We can be only was on Saturday. Harold Monro, "Week-End".

2 Down the close, darkening lanes they sang their way To the siding-shed And lined the train with faces grimly gay. Wilfred Owen, "The Send-Off".

3 How long ago Hector took off his plume. Not wanting that his little son should cry. Then I kissed his head Andromache goodbye. And they wept and Helen wept and I. Francis Cornford, "Hector's Farewell".



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COMMENTARY

Acting accessible

Keith Brown

SHAKESPEARE

The Henrys: Henry IV parts I and II and Henry V
Old Vic

The new English Shakespeare Company has been formed to tour large-scale classical drama under the aesthetic direction of its founders, Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington, of whom the former directs, the latter plays the lead in this trilogy. One aim of the company is to strengthen the art of ensemble playing in Britain, thought to have been weakened of late by changes in RSC policy. Another is to bring increased awareness of Shakespeare to a new and younger generation of playgoers, by tours offering "accessible" productions that do not assume that audiences have necessarily seen or read the play before. Before reaching the Old Vic, *The Henrys* had already been seen in fourteen British and European cities, and will later cross the Atlantic. The Old Vic marathon (it is best to see the trilogy entire in the course of a single Saturday) gives a first indication of the kind of Shakespeare they may expect.

Both founders have obvious qualifications as ambassadors of Shakespearean drama. Michael Pennington is an experienced Shakespearean actor whose work has of late been much admired. He has intelligence, charm and good looks, but seems rather to have the makings of a star than of a great actor. This isn't likely to reduce the popularity of the ESC's tours; but may a little affect the notion of Shakespeare that the tours may foster in

their audiences. Like many stars he seems to function only in four or five gears, between which he shifts rather clumsily; and – again like many stars – there is a faintly lightweight feel about him. He lacks that peculiar animal authority that marks the great actor; yet when he shouts to compensate for this his voice is too light for that to work either. As long as a scene fits a particular Pennington persona (as when dictating the French surrender at the close of *Henry V*) he can be genuinely impressive. But he often seems deaf to the natural shape or rhythm of Shakespearean speeches, and a little prone, too, to the modern actor's vice of trying to give his part a factitious extra weight by playing it over-neurotically. Thus Henry's speech before Harfleur – a beautifully-shaped piece of Shakespearean rhetoric – is delivered by Pennington, on top of a burned-out tank, in an un-nuanced continuous semi-shout, rather high-pitched. By the end, his charisma and confidence seduce us into blaming the play itself for a certain jerkiness and unclarity that are really part of his own performance.

A similar lack of trust in Shakespeare's words – or perhaps in a modern audience's capacity to listen – is shown by Michael Bogdanov. Popular prejudice may be said to regard Shakespearean drama as a form of church-going: good for you, no doubt, and with its occasional moving or spectacular moments, but largely consisting of a boring or even incomprehensible stream of words delivered in organ-like voices. Bogdanov seems at bottom resigned to this prejudice, which his marvelously inventive production does much to palliate but in some ways half accepts. Some of the most famous flights of poetry in *Henry IV* are

here crunched flat, while the rebel lords' exposition scenes tend to be delivered with an even sonorous flow of sound, quite impossible to follow, that says as clearly as any illuminated sign "Hold on, we're just ploughing through a dead bit." He can get away with such slackness because he knows a large part of his intended audience expect large chunks of Shakespeare to be boringly obscure, but in so doing he reinforces that expectation: in a self-appointed ambassador of Shakespearean drama that is hard to forgive.

That said, however, the rest must be unequivocal praise. What is offered is very good popular Shakespeare: necessarily a little cluttered with more entertaining visual gimmicks (supermarket trolleys on the battlefield, for instance) than purist taste might perhaps wish, but blessedly free from wrenched over-individual performances. John Woodvine, cheerfully authoritative, placing every word with the casual accuracy of a snooker champion placing his shots, is Falstaff: when comes such another? Jenny Quayle is first startlingly moving as Doll Tearsheet, and then a revelation as Princess Katharine: every previous performance of the courtship scene that this reviewer has ever watched is made to seem lightweight by her silently eloquent fusion of pride, humiliation, dutifulness and force of character. Clyde Politt's Justice Shallow is unforgettable in his gentle, shy happiness. Other actors in parts of smaller scope do just as well with the more limited material offered them: nowhere is there any trace of the ineptness that the RSC nowadays seems at times to tolerate in minor roles: the competition from this new force in the theatre can only be healthy.

Trading futures

Frances Cairncross

CARYL CHURCHILL
Serious Money
Royal Court Theatre

A friend of mine, a senior gilt dealer in an old-established City firm, recently took early retirement. He was a cultured, entertaining man with a wide knowledge of classical literature, whose company had just been taken over by another, in one of those hastily concocted alliances put together to cope with the new and brutal competition in securities trading after Big Bang. "I don't want to be a battery chicken sitting in front of a screen; playing computer games," he said.

I hope he goes to see Caryl Churchill's new play *Serious Money*. Written largely in rhyme, it is a wickedly accurate portrait of the cultural revolution which has been taking place in the City. My friend would even recognize a kindred spirit in Frodo, the sad jobber who loved the cosy old City and hates the new brutalism:

Since Big Bang, the floor is bare,
They deal in offices, on screens.
But if the chap's not really there,
You can't be certain what he means.

The game in the City, as another of Churchill's characters puts it, has become "a cross between roulette and space invaders". And the sort of people who do well seems now to be only those with the nerve and the narrowness to get a kick from both games. "The traders are coming up the fast track," says the play's inevitable American banker. Trading is not, an intellectual affair. The people who are best at it (like Churchill's Grimes, kicked out of his comprehensive with a CSE in maths) are often those who have not been taught to theorize or to rationalize. Traders know how much money they are worth, in themselves and their bosses, to the nearest penny. So the City has become increasingly populated by people whose skill is simply to make money, and whose value to their firm can be totted up in pounds and pence at the end of every day.

Churchill has cleverly sketched in their world. She has deftly caught the feel of the trading floor at LIFFE (the London International Financial Futures Exchange) with its youthful mixture of upper-crust and lower-

blacks and women, all arrayed in their firm's brightly coloured blazers. She has caught their language: a mixture of obscenity and glibbling, recreating the row in a dealing room on busy day, with dealers alternately sweating and cajoling down two phones at once. The cast of eight are versatile and exuberant.

To do all this is good enough. It makes you wonder briefly why others have not used the City as their background more often. The answer is that what people do in the City often appears to the rest of the world to be too complicated to explain to those who want to be entertained. Yet it can be done – witness Charles Dickens's splendid account of the Anglo-Bengalee life assurance scheme in *North or South*, or *Trading Places*, the Eddie Murphy film comedy about American con men modulates markets. There is a little *tour de force* towards the end of her first act, when Churchill explains, accurately and in verse, the workings of futures markets in general and of financial futures markets in particular.

As for the plot, Churchill has knitted together all the best City stories of the past year. There is a takeover bid with overtones of BTR's bid for Pilkington's, and undertones of the Guinness bid for Distillers. There is a hint of Ralph Halpern's sex life, and of Ivan Boesky's deals. There is an upright stockbroker ("brokers to royalty") lending respectability to a devious corporate raider, and there is a Peruvian version of Imelda Marcos, busily investing her country's overseas aid in Eurobonds. Even those who don't get all the in-jokes will still get the message.

Everyone in the play is driven by greed, or fear, or both. And that is, perhaps, *Serious Money's* one weakness. For the scandals in the City have been only partly the result of greed. They have been the outward sign of an industry changing too fast for its senior participants to keep control. Some of those who have been disgraced simply failed to keep track of what was going on under their own noses. After Big Bang, it may become easier to pick up villains not harder. And the City should be glad if it turns out to be true. For it is now playing in a world league, against other big financial centres which will grab its business if they get half a chance. Investors will come more willingly through the City if they believe they will be treated honestly. If virtue pays, the City will want to practise it.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The pleasures of the chase: the Opie Collection

Brian Alderson

During the summer of 1944 Iona and Peter Opie, recently married, were walking in a meadow at Waresley in Bedfordshire. A ladybird alighted on one of them (it is not remembered which) and was adjured in customary terms to fly away home – which it possibly did. It left behind, however, a lifetime's work for the two people it had visited. For why should they have bade it go with the words they did? Where did such trivial, but universal, jingles come from? And what was their relationship (if any) to the wider world of children's lore and popular culture?

That walk in the meadow was to lead initially to the *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* of 1951, one of the few works of genuine scholarship related to children's literature, and Iona and Peter Opie's early labours on the *Dictionary* were to prompt the foundation of the "Opie Collection". For, although they had both bought books avidly from childhood on, they first worked on the *Dictionary* through such general sources as James Orchard Halliwell's *Nursery Rhymes of England*, clues from which they would follow up in the British Museum. One day in 1945, however, Peter Opie returned home after a visit to Hatchard's bookshop bearing a copy of *The Cheerful Warbler; or juvenile song book*, a sixteen-page collection of nursery rhymes published by Kendrew of York c1820 – which he was later to describe as "notable for the number of references it contains to drink". Suddenly it became clear how much evidence for the dispersal and variation of nursery rhymes might be gleaned from just such obscure or neglected publications, and the Opie Collection found its purpose.

As any collector worth his salt can confirm, however, a sense of purpose is infinitely adaptable and it did not take Iona and Peter Opie long to realize that a collection of nursery-rhyme books required for its support the establishment of related collections. In imaginative terms, nursery rhymes merge into popular poetry and folk-tale, which in their turn merge into composed literature for children. In graphic terms, the illustrators, processes, motifs represented in nursery-rhyme books only take on a full life when seen in other contexts. In commercial terms, a *Cheerful Warbler* – as indeed a *Helen Oxenbury Nursery Rhyme Book* of today – may owe as much to publishing decisions and book-trade fashions as it does to any profound aesthetic impulses. In these, and many other ways, a powerful reciprocal relationship can be built up between the parts of a collection and the whole.

The Opies were fortunate in their timing. They arrived on the scene when interest in children's books was growing (the National Book League's widely influential exhibition *Children's Books of Yesterday* was mounted in 1946) but before bibliographical scholarship –

not least their own – had awakened rich American institutions to the potential of the subject. Booksellers began to take account of hitherto despised "juveniles"; some, aware of the Opie interest, began to channel material in their direction; and the growth of their own knowledge as the collection progressed enabled them to foresee what was important long before the rest came limping along. Peter Opie, especially, gloried in the chase. He used to say that collectors might appear to live unexciting lives and that it took another collector to know the tensions of desire and the thrills of discovery that seemed to be, for him, almost a daily experience.

From the early focus on "nursery books" the collection diversified into every area of children's publishing, from educational books to comics, from miniature libraries to movables. It was, however, erratic in its holdings of twentieth-century and foreign books – lacunae that were handsomely filled when Iona and Peter Opie obtained the children's books collected by Roland Knaster who, as a young man, had lent books to Harvey Darton when he was

cridge's rare fantasy for children, *Phantasmion* (1837), an unfindable book, but here with an inscription by the author to Dora Wordsworth; or a better copy of Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon's manuscript *Comic Alphabet* than the one at Toronto (which the curators of the Osborne Collection presumably believed to be unique).

It is not for exhibition-pieces like these that the Opie Collection is important, however, but for the extent of its holdings of rare, unusual or fine children's books of every kind. There are several major subject-collections within the whole: obviously nursery rhymes and poetry, but also such things as miniature books, or the Fuller doll books, or the exceptional range of *Strawpeter* editions and imitations. Inconceivably, though, the representation of the years to 1820 is the collection's strongest area, with book after book having to be singled out as either a unique edition or an edition in outstanding state. It would be rash to suggest that these holdings out-do those in the British Library, but I suspect that they do in magnitude and I am sure that they do in condition and in their runs of variant editions: for example, that revolutionary little introduction to reading, with its play-way alphabet, the *Child's New Play-thing* for 1743, 1745, 1763, 1775 (the British Library, appears to have only 1743 and a slightly defective Dublin edition of 1819). Many variants are only discernible as such because of the presence of other copies. (No one, so far as I know, has been able to tease out the bibliography of the *True History of a Little Old Woman who Found a Silver Penny*, Tabart 1806–1808, because no one has been able to lay out the three crucial editions side by side, as can be done *chez Opie* – and, incidentally, Mrs Opie has discovered that this versified version of "The Old Woman and her Pig" is by "Monk" Lewis.)

It can, of course, be argued that teasing out the bibliography of children's rhymes is frippery – even though the *Little Old Woman* is both an early example of a publisher using a panoramic illustration, and an example of the trade rushing out a book before the engraver had finished his work. But critics would discover from a close examination of the 20,000 items that make up the collection that it was devoted from the beginning to establishing and clarifying many facts which have for too long been the subject of conjecture. As such it served primarily the research undertaken by Iona and Peter Opie, either in their study of child-lore or in their expositions of children's poetry, children's fairy-tales and eighteenth-century bibliography. In its turn this research has become both an example of the scrupulous use of a range of printed sources and a stimulus to further exploration of the hinterland of children's literature. It is impossible to estimate how great is the wealth of evidence that historians of childhood will find here, whether they are looking at what is revealed of the children (not least the mass of childish inscriptions in the books) or of adult attitudes to children and



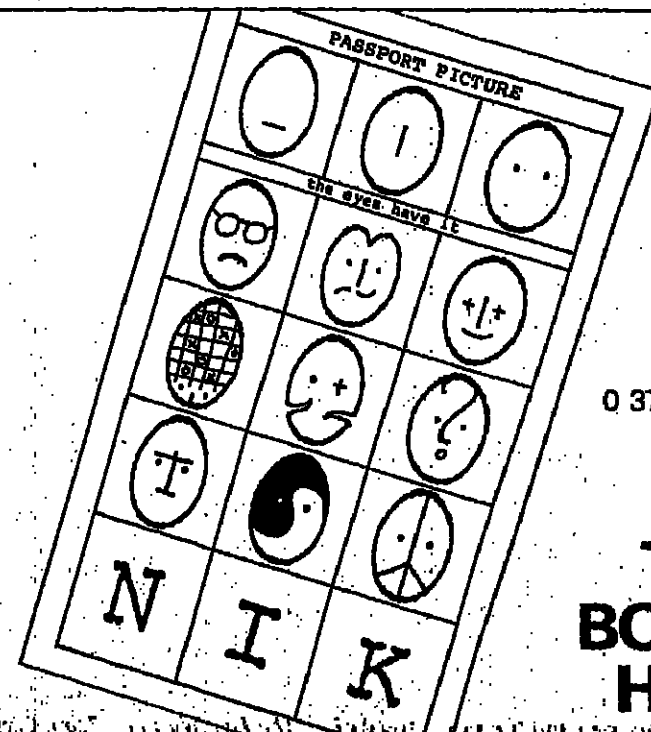
Sophie and Nick dancing at the wake, one of Patsy Simmonds's illustrations to her latest book, *Fred*, which is reviewed on page 357.

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to the books that adults themselves remembered from their youth (children's books satirizing earlier children's books are a study in themselves). There can be little doubt that eventually the study of children's books will be recognized for its importance not only as a literary discipline but also for the light that it has to throw on such matters as the history of book illustration or the evolution of the English book-trade.

It is vital to ensure that a collection as significant as that of Iona and Peter Opie be attached to the foremost academic library in the United Kingdom (details of the Bodleian Library's appeal are given below). For in addition to the rare material represented by its 20,000 items the collection is already at least half-fledged as a source of learned bibliographic information. This has come about largely through Peter Opie's dedicated professionalism as a collector. Although he and Mrs Opie delighted in collecting things other than books (there are magnificent Opie collections of toys, games and printed ephemera), he recognized the special discipline that a book collection imposes on its owner in analysing the inter-relationships of its constituent parts. In consequence he kept detailed records both of acquisitions and of many individual items, in order to make specific points about the character of the book in question and its bibliographical status.

In many of the later books these notes are included in the copy or in its protective envelope (and they may be paralleled by less formal, less authoritative notes by Roland Knaster on his books), but for the eighteenth-century material there is a separate card file related to a huge index of known material, whether in the collection or not. Peter Opie's notes in this file may occasionally be as brief as a librarian's catalogue card, but more often he will draw attention to the scarcity of the book, its quality (or lack of it) within its genre, and the implications that it may have for our understanding of the bibliography or the life of the period. An unwritten history of eighteenth-century children and their literature is to be

found on those cards. The notes may record a sage comment on Penton's splendid *Guardian's Instructor* (1688), or they may argue the toss for publishers' hand-colouring in the superb copy of Tringham's *Lilliputian History* (c1780).

A similar paean to the delights of collecting is found in Peter Opie's accessions diaries. They begin tamely (but mouth-wateringly) enough with the bare record of *Original Nursery Rhymes* by A. J. Ellis (1848), bought from Book Bag for 15s 0d on March 8, 1955, but they gradually burgeon into a richly personal and often very funny commentary on the pleasures of the chase. Not the least pertinent of these is that for the Nourse, Crowder, Baldwin *Select Tales and Fables* (c1775) bought from Max Brimmell in 1950 for 2 guineas.

Found suddenly towards end of pricey modern books catalogue, got up in middle of breakfast and rang for, & just as well I did, becos Brimmell when sending it says: "The Bodleian rang for this just after your call and said they were glad it was going to a good home."

This may be capped by the entry recording the triumphant purchase from Richard Gilbertson (for 12 guineas) of the 1706 *Arabian Nights*, the only other known copy of which is at Princeton. Here too the Bodleian was pipped at the post and a disgruntled voice told Gilbertson on the telephone: "Peter Opie - we thought he only collected children's books."

The Opie Collection has been professionally valued at £1 million. Mrs Opie has offered to give £500,000 for the Collection to be secured for the Bodleian Library, provided that the balance can be found. Unless the appeal is successful the Collection will be broken up or sold overseas. Already £100,000 has been raised. Cheques, requests for further information and details of covenant schemes should be sent to Friends of the Bodleian Opie Appeal, The Bodleian Library, Oxford OX1 3BG. There will be an exhibition of books from the Collection at the Bodleian from June 9, 1987.

Apt appropriations

Katherine Duncan-Jones

WARREN W. WOODEN
Children's Literature of the English Renaissance
181pp. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky; distributed by Harper and Row. £17.
08131 15876

What, in the English Renaissance, was children's literature? If we limit our definition to "imaginative literature written exclusively for young readers", we find virtually none earlier than the Restoration. However, in practice, "children's literature" must have consisted of any literature on which children could lay their hands. Sidney's *Astrophel* compares himself to

a child that some faire booke doth find,
With gilded leaves or coloured Velveteen plays.
Or at the most on some fine picture staves,
But never heeds the fruit of writer's mind.

Children like Sidney grew up amid a wealth of illuminated manuscripts, such as the fine "Sidney Psalter" now at Trinity College, Cambridge, and presentation copies of more recent books and manuscripts. Less privileged Elizabethan infants may have had to wait to get to school before putting their sticky fingers on horn books, or admiring the engraved colophon at the back of Lily's *Grammar*, which shows boys throwing sticks at a pear-tree in their eagerness to discover "fruit of writer's mind". For the most part, however, "conversations" - to use Alice's criterion - greatly outnumbered "pictures" in Elizabethan school books.

In this readable and thought-provoking collection of essays the late Warren W. Wooden points out that many Elizabethan children would also have encountered illustrated stories in church, in the shape of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, chained in most churches and cathedrals. The horrors vividly depicted in the woodcuts, the marginal glosses summarizing salient points - "Like a pulled hen" - and the occasional tales of good and bad children, such as "Gods punishment upon a damsel of twelve years old", here quoted in full, all served to bring Foxe's message within the understanding

of the young. That Foxe's book was thought suitable for the young is confirmed by John Taylor's tiny verse abridgement of it, published in 1617. In an essay on Taylor, Wooden draws attention to the Water Poet's pioneering ventures in several genres now appropriated by children, such as the nonsense story and the faithful-animal tale. He calls Taylor's *A Doge of Warre* "the prototype or great-grandfather of the Lassie stories". Taken another way, however, Taylor's ceaseless production of popular books for hitherto neglected markets, such as young apprentices with a few pence to spend, is evidence of how few works had been available for juvenile readers, or the semi-literate. Wooden's opening three essays, on Newton, Foxe, Comenius, three surviving sermons by boy bishops, and Skelton's *Phillip Sparrow*, do not suggest otherwise. Among these, the only work clearly designed for children is Comenius's encyclopaedic *Orbis Pictus*, which is late as 1657; in English, 1658. Wooden's analysis of *Phillip Sparrow* in terms of child perception and ritual is sensitive and subtle, yet he is honest enough to report H.L.R. Edwards's discovery that Jane Scrope "was probably in her early twenties when the poem was composed". The public role of children during the Marian period is discussed in the fourth essay - the sadly barren Mary Tudor restored some of the rituals using children, such as the Childermas ceremonies, which father had abolished. Two essays which overlap with each other too much, and should have been amalgamated by the editor, deal with Renaissance fairy poetry. Unfortunately, though we may speculate on the likely attractions for children of such works as Dryden's *Nymphidia* or Herrick's "Oberon's Fear", definite evidence that these were, in fact, offered to children seems to be lacking. Bunyan's *A Book for Boys and Girls* (1686) certainly was, and it is the subject of the final essay. It seems to have been fallen upon by hungry generations to such an extent that most copies came to pieces. Only two copies of the 1686 edition survive and numerous later editions known to have existed have disappeared altogether. "Children's literature" in the modern sense was at last being produced, but it was not yet nearly enough to satisfy demand.

The literature of adversity

Heather O'Donoghue

FRANCELLA BUTLER and RICHARD ROTERT
(Editors)
Triumphs of the Spirit in Children's Literature
252pp. Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press. \$27.50 (paperback, \$17.50).
0208 021108

All children readily identify with characters in books who struggle to rise above adversities such as poverty, hostility, abuse or bereavement. A measure of success in such endeavours is what is meant by a triumph of the spirit in this collection of essays, and the value of identifying with those who so struggle is made clear: children can be taught that the imagination may be used as a coping mechanism, though in a way which transcends mere escapism, because, for both the characters and for the children themselves, "escapist elements can be discarded without violating the basic dreams and hopes that make endurance possible".

Of course, reference to spiritual triumph automatically evokes its opposite: the spirit triumphs even, or especially, when the person is abused. One of the most thought-provoking aspects of this volume is its exploration of the dark side of children's lives as reflected in literature. There is, for example, a painful study of the literature produced by Jewish children in Nazi concentration camps - children who knowingly faced death but whose poems and diaries still express hope, determination and a sharply heightened joy of life. A refreshingly un-obvious piece on Freudian transformations in folk and fairy-tales reminds us just how many stories of this kind deal with child abuse in surprisingly explicit, as well as implicit, ways. An assessment of Hans Andersen considers whether and why the bleak patterns of some of his tales have proved so influential. The editors' introduction to the volume

books describing death - especially the death of children - is dealt with in two fascinating essays, one on seventeenth-century Puritan "joyful death" literature, stories of babies and children who die happily, having renounced sin, or not, as a lesson to naughty children; the other on Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. This last piece not only tries to explain why Foxe was once thought suitable and even necessary reading for children, but also goes so far as to suggest a modern defence of that view: "Death in Foxe is never unimportant... violence and death are not transmuted into entertainment as a source of curiosity or amusement."

Much of the best work in this volume consists of perceptive literary criticism of children's classics - the work of familiar authors such as Frances Hodgson Burnett, Jill Paton Walsh, Maurice Sendak or Judy Blume - in which the special meanings fantasy, secrecy, mystery and deception have for growing children are illuminated. Some essays are distinctively, even exclusively, American in their awareness of, and loyalty to, the great American dream. But Hawaiian, Chinese and even Ancient Greek children's literature is discussed here, and there are pieces on topics as diverse as the poor quality of Mormon literature for children, and the element of childlessness in the avant-garde movement which culminated in Dadaism.

Such a wide range of subject-matter is underpinned by the overall seriousness of purpose in the whole volume. Nowhere does the writing lapse into the speculative, spotty and essentially unserious sentimentality which sometimes characterizes writing on the imaginative world of children: every essay shows the underlying assumption that literature for children can have a profound effect on their spiritual welfare, and can thus be of fundamental importance in the quality of their lives, and indeed, our future.

Divining disaster

Geoffrey Trease

JEAN MORRIS
The Troy Game
110pp. Bodley Head. £6.95.
0370 307593

This story's title has no Homeric connections. The "troy" is one of those ancient circular mazes whose pattern occurs in places as far apart as Knossos and Etruria, Scandinavia and the Isles of Scilly. A puzzled child might hunt vainly through standard dictionaries for the word, which is nowhere in my own three, so Jean Morris wisely indicates its meaning on her opening page. It is central to her book, the very pattern of which is also the pattern of the maze.

The tale has a certain Tolkienesque weirdness, though a few hints pin it down, in so far as a shadow can be pinned down, to the fifth century AD. Lingered memories of Rome glint in the darkness of the age. An attractive minor character is old Ambrosianus, still trying to keep up old standards in his run-down villa, like some dinner-jacketed Briton in a remote corner of Africa who has not noticed the wind of change. There are also some unspecified "rulers from the east" at whose identity it is easy to guess. But this is fantasy rather than historical fiction.

Brannock, son of a petty king, is given an urgent errand by Mennor, the mysterious village elder, who belongs to an order of similar elders, "whose memories had to hold the history of all the kingdoms, as well as no one knew

what charms and secret lore". Not unnaturally these wise men frequently disagree with their respective rulers, whom Jean Morris depicts with the acidulous pen of a Westminster or Washington correspondent. The boy is to carry Mennor's runic message to the hidden headquarters of the Order, with a warning that the land is in danger of betrayal to the invaders. To find his way he carries his "bob", an ancient brooch tied to a thong, which swings helpfully to divine the right direction.

For company Brannock soon acquires his cousin, Eilian, a lively and engaging character with marigold-coloured plaits, whose "little-egg face" not surprisingly goes "greenish white" in the more stress-filled situations, which are numerous. She wears the fellow of Brannock's brooch, but hers is in better condition, showing quite clearly the incised pattern of the troy which proves to be the route-map for their devious journey through an eerie landscape given to sudden changes in its appearance. If the boy has his divining bob, the girl can do a bit of spell-casting herself, "fire-making and weather, mostly", she explains modestly, but quite useful on such a trip as this. Otherwise, there is little to distinguish the two young people from a modern boy and girl embarked on some improbable adventure.

Though alarmingly separated, they both reach the stone circle of thirteen dolmens which conceals the Hall of the Elders. Straightforward action now develops into a vivid symbolism which some readers may find bewildering. The Elders invoke the "final weapon" against the invaders - they call upon the Wild Hunt to harrow the land. We are given an apocalyptic vision of the antlered Hunter breaking over the hills like a hailstorm with his red-eyed horses and red-eared hounds. Destruction is almost universal. The invaders are defeated, but the people also have to pay for it, and in the final pages Brannock and Eilian move about like disembodied ghosts, invisible to the survivors. The interpretation of Jean Morris's symbolism is presumably nuclear war.

Roadworthy

A lively miniature picaresque, *Travelling Hopefully* (120pp. Julia MacRae. £6.95. 0 86203 267 9) charts the whistle-stop tour of Devon undertaken by young (twelve-ish?) Clare and her youthful (twenty-five-ish?) Aunt Maggie when Clare's mother, eight months pregnant, has to go into hospital. What is supposed to be a holiday for Clare is unfortunately a working assignment for Maggie who, as a freelance journalist, has been commissioned to write up her trip for a magazine, *Holiday UK*. Under financial pressure and the threat of a deadline, Maggie aims to cover her itinerary as snappily as possible, with no untoward lingering in beauty-spots or amusement arcades. The stringent nature of the relationship between aunt and niece, expressed in the constant spiky exchange of verbal insults, is one of the book's most refreshing pleasures. Inevitably, a strong mutual affection must gradually work its way to the surface, but Judy Allen successfully skirts the trap of sentimentality as she draws her characters into a more expressive concern for each other's feelings. Nor is her psychological insight biased towards the child's-eye view; its focus is finely balanced at both levels.

Despite her cocky stance, Clare is perplexed by her mother's illness, and her half-acknowledged unease, reaching a climax when an overheard telephone conversation leads her to conclude the worst, contributes much of the story's narrative tension. When Clare, taking matters into her own hands, sets off with her toy compass and rucksack, she experiences real fear in the dark Devon lanes - a fear shared, on another level, by Maggie, who is out in the car, searching for her - and both characters are seen to learn and grow as a result of the ordeal. There are many reminders throughout the book of the social realities: *Holiday UK*, for example, is a dodgy new enterprise, whose get-rich-quick young proprietor fails to deliver Maggie's cheque, forcing her and Clare to exist on the slippery, laminated slopes of the credit-card economy. Even the fact that Clare has not been told about her mother's health complications and does not know that she herself was born by Caesarean section seems to be a moral comment.

It is to Judy Allen's credit that these issues are suggested, rather than belaboured. She rarely patronizes her readers; my only doubt concerns the amount of space she gives to the weak jokes which Clare helps Maggie invent for the children's page of an airline free-sheet. I suspect that this point, at which Judy Allen most overtly winks her readers, will be where they turn the pages most quickly.

Carol Rumens

Two legs bad

David Profumo

A. N. WILSON
Stray
175pp. Walker. £8.95.
0 7445 0801 0

The household cat seems to polarize human affections more drastically than any other animal. Those who love these aloof, peripheral beasts confer on them idealized qualities of intelligence and independence that make cat-worshipping literature tedious to the infidel, but it is a measure of A. N. Wilson's psychological subtlety that after twenty chapters of his feline biography the present reviewer (if not an ailurophobe, then a confirmed cynic and dog-lover) found he had been converted.

The narrator of *Stray* is a seven-year-old tabby who is telling his grandson the story of his life. He is known in the neighbourhood as Pufftail, but refuses to answer to that or any other name, since the naming of things is a ritual of enslavement which he resents as strongly as the notion of domestic residence - these smack of the treacherous world of clumsy humans, or "two-footers", a smelly, ham-fisted and often cruel race.

Far from being the sleek scallywag of stereotyped convention, this distinguished gentleman of the road is, by his own admission, an infinitely superior being who regards the feline existence as a grim and passionate lot. "Truly of all creatures, we cats have the greatest genius for life", he informs the kitten; and "Being a cat... is a story of unending and unexplained loss." His own experiences bear this out.

His story begins with betrayal and disorientation, like the saga of some Victorian orphan, as he and his brother are imprisoned in a petshop window, at the mercy of a mercenary and ingratiating gaoler who begrudges them their food and resents their natural functions.

Their first foster-parent is kindly Granny Harris who makes them happy enough and is too good to last. One morning, however, Granny won't wake up: the Great Stillness has claimed her. No longer wanted, the cats are flung from a car window on to a busy bypass by two louts; the Stillness comes to Pufftail's brother under the wheels of a bus. Our hero is rescued and taken to a convent, but life there is too tame and once again he takes to the road.

It is clear early on in the book that, with the odd honourable exception, the human race is going to get a bad press and this is perhaps its main attraction. In places it is uncompromisingly painful but children of, say, ten and over will respond as readily as adults to the incomprehensible way in which people are shown behaving towards animals. Wilson manages to eschew squishy sentimentality, but his otherwise successful attempts at establishing a sense of distance are not well served by the derivative touches of Mr. Trian ("small paper chimneys" for cigarettes) at odds with the feline perspicacity we are invited to admire.

After the convent, Pufftail's freedom is short-lived, for he is forcibly enrolled in a communistic brotherhood of cats. The whole community is scooped up one night and delivered to a disgusting laboratory, where shampoo and cosmetics are tested on the victims until the liberationists arrive. When the leader, Tom-Cat, is released from his cage he has had his tail and his eyelids cut off and has been harnessed to a treadmill. Young readers will have several questions about that.

Grim as it is in places, the overall impression that the book creates is one of proper affection and the author's imaginative sympathy sets at the heart of the story a convincing narrative personality. Despite his traumatic history, the old fellow discovers true love and a certain wary contentment, and develops a clubbable charm - "Dear girl, you are kindness itself!" Conspicuous (as biologists call humans whom cats have deigned to adopt) will find this book a salutary and accomplished performance.

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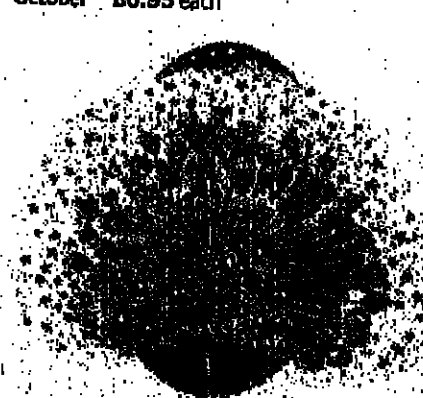
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Eric Korn

Pop-up books! How enticing they sound! Funny, racy and divine! Playfully educational, folksy ingenious, their appeal is broad, their application wide. Suitable subjects run from erection to Resurrection, from bio-engineering to Divine geometry. The reality disappoints. What pops up, mostly, is a bandwagon on which publishers have clambered without reflection.

But no modern pop-up merely pops; it also wiggles, transforms, rotates. The technology is Victorian, but the execution is not. The text is not Victorian, but it isn't postmodern either. Pop-ups usually come – this may be the trouble – with credits like space movies: the four specimens to which Peter Seymour has put his name are the property of Intervisual Communications Inc, produced in Mexico, published in Los Angeles, edited or at least sold in the United Kingdom.

The archaeology text, *Discovering Our Past*, is cheerless. It opens on to a family scene of the Upper Palaeolithic: wholesome blond (and improbably cleanly) Glug is helping Papa chip a flint while his sister helps Mamma with the cooking. There are naive paintings of eurochs on the walls. Around the main sculptured figures are vignettes of Neanderthal and Habiline Men, who stand with their mouths hanging open to show that they are primitive. You can turn a wheel to see "different kinds of tools to show how they changed during a hundred thousand years": but the wheel shows nothing of the kind, unless current theory believes that the palaeolithic hand-axe (called confusingly a rock chopper) evolved into a bone axe by way of a harpoon.

That is all the palaeoanthropology you get, and the flipside of the wheel shows hieroglyphs, another singularly inappropriate subject for the format. There is an agreeable pop-up pyramid, and if you push a tab on the side of it, sweating fellahin drag blocks up a ramp. (No, they don't sweat when you pull the tab, which would be an impressive piece of paper engineering; the movement is quite as innocent of levers as the Egyptians themselves; drag the tab sideways and the attached figures move too.) There are Ming warriors, one of whom, by an ingenious device, shows his back if

turned over: there are slats which show what happened to Pompeii, some silly questions and answers, and the whole dispiriting exercise ends "think how exciting it would be to find a ship a thousand years old filled with gold and silver!" – precisely the greed-ideology which destroys precious sites.

Exploring the Solar System is prettier but drier. The solar system (as seen, not to scale, from a rather odd vantage point between Neptune and Uranus) pops out at you from the first page opening: except that it doesn't pop but flicks up and down again like a shutter, a bizarre but not displeasing effect. The phases of the moon are poetically shown, Jupiter's red spot lurches out at you like a Saturday-night drunk, and the Viking Lander cocks its extensible leg roughly and dips its solar reflector.

Younger children are offered learning in a still more apologetic fashion. They have to visit the farm or the human body in the jollifying company of Chuckles the Clown and Ricky the Raccoon, lest there be not enough entertainment in agriculture or anatomy to hold their attention for a few seconds. Chuckles, to whom I took an instant dislike, carries eggs, milks cows, catches fish on a fish farm, shears sheep (fun this), plays a horn to demonstrate the functions of a mouth. There is much to confuse children, British children especially: "You find FRUIT growing on TREES, VINES or PLANTS". Milk products are a yellow oblong of butter, an orange triangle of cheese, a blue packet of ice-cream. What is sweet? Candy and cookies. What is bitter? Coffee. What is salty? Pretzels. Some parts of the text don't seem to have been read aloud to a critical adult or child: "Chuckles and Ricky show which parts of your body let you SEE, HEAR, SMELL and TOUCH. These are called SENSES." At the end, to underline the sense of achievement, there are questions inane even for a three-year-old, with answers under flaps. "What comes from a cow?" I dared not look.

It is a relief to turn to *The Earth is a Sundial*, the uncompromising work of Mitsumasa Anno, the shaman of Origami, who can make paper sit up and beg. Books on dialling were among the earliest with movable parts: and Anno's step-by-step manual bristles with gnarled figures on every page. It is pretty, imaginative and precise, and his publishers, being men of honour, are not ashamed to print an embarrass-

ing admission about a confusion between magnetic and geographic North (you can't tell a sundial by a magnetic compass, though it's a bit easier, presumably, to correct for a declination), albeit it is tucked away in an acknowledgement. A book full of Resurrection charm, and the ideal gift for young bibliophiles if they haven't all been digitalized by now.

Peter Seymour: *Discovering Our Past*. Illustrated by Boris Svendsen. Paper Engineering by John Simpson. Child's Play International. £3.95. 0 85953 214 1. *Exploring the Solar System*. Illustrated by Boris Svendsen. Paper Engineering by John Simpson. Child's Play International. £3.95. 0 85953 219 1. *Learn About Your Body and Learn About Farm*. Illustrated by Chuck Murphy. Engineered by L. Lukvig. Child's Play International. £2.95. 0 859 277 1 and 0 85953 278 X. Mitsumasa Anno: *The Earth is a Sundial*. Book Head. £9.95. 0 370 31016 0.

Melancholic

John Mole

RUSSELL HOBAN
The Marzipan Pig
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
36pp. Cape. £4.95.
0 224 01687 3

Russell Hoban's *The Marzipan Pig* is good enough to eat. There are two pigs which may be many ways rather desolate, fantasy. Both are eaten. The first, whose profound sense of rejection and loss informs several of the events that follow, seems doomed before the story begins. "There was nothing to be done for marzipan pig." He has fallen, unnoticed, behind the sofa and is left crying in the darkness. The living-room becomes an indifferent universe which hope is precious but unfulfilled. He begins to sweat, "as marzipan will", and grows quite philosophical as his tiny being batters and becomes bitter and he feels his sweetness wasted. There is a wonderful accuracy, a tenderness to the material (or confection), in that sweet marzipan which is characteristic of Hoban's firm, unsentimental grasp of particulars. It ensures that his flights of fancy never become whimsical.

What sets the narrative ticking through a swift sequence of events and feeding out of characters is the craving and sadness experienced by the previously carefree mouse who discovers the pig and eats him. She finds that she has ingested an overwhelming sense of loneliness, and from the moment she eats from her post-prandial doze *The Marzipan Pig* becomes a picaresque, protean quest for love and happiness in which the identity of the searcher keeps changing but the goal remains the same. The mouse, after sharing her loneliness with a clock which dies of an overwork spring when she leaves it, is eaten by an owl thus passing on her unfulfilled yearning. The owl, in his turn, falls for the glow of a meter which reads "For Hire".

"I love you so much!" said the owl to the meter. "How much do you love me?" "30p", said the meter as the cab pulled up at the cab stand by the bridge again. The driver stopped at a taxi and turned off the lights. The meter went dark. "Light up again", said the owl. "Tell me again how much you love."

At the end of an ingenious chain of events a second mouse finds herself inside a small parcel with a second marzipan pig. Unlike the first, this pig is "fresh from the confectionery" and has no experience of life whatever. "There was no single thought in him, just marzipan." She eats him, and he passes on nothing but the enchantment of innocence and the provisional gift of a happy ending.

Russell Hoban is a master of melancholy, bitter-sweet fantasy. He has a fertile, playful imagination, a seriously playful philosophy, bent and there is a lyrical sweep and momentum to his narrative, which delightfully even hints at darker truths. Once again, Quentin Blake takes his lines for a walk and complements the text with a blend of wit and pathos.

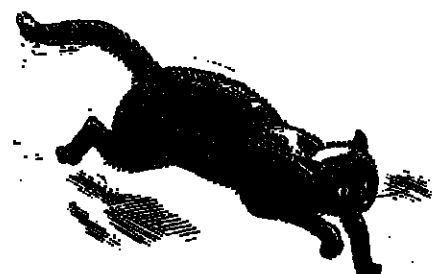
Under the buddleia

Blake Morrison

POSSY SIMMONDS
Fred
Unnumbered pages. Cape. £5.95.
0 224 02448 5

For her first children's book, Posy Simmonds has set herself a doubly difficult task: to make a cat the principal character without thereby becoming whimsical, Gothic or a soft number for pet-lovers; and to write about death, a topic on which most children's literature, as Empson would say, has been prepared to stay blank. Cats and death do not make the most obvious of combinations – not even in supernatural tales, where spindly black cats often feature as witch-appendants, still less so in the work of T. S. Eliot, who saw the skull beneath the skin but not the grimace in the grin of a Cheshire cat. It is a tribute to Posy Simmonds's originality that she makes a match of such strange bedfellows.

Fred himself – fat, furry, domesticated – is a more familiar bedfellow, asleep perpetually on wall, fridge-top and ironing board, "the laziest cat in the world" according to his child-owners Sophie and Nick. When he dies the children feel sad but are hard pressed to find words for his gravestone: as far as they know, he "did miffing" all his life except the occasional "wees" in the flowerbed. It comes as a surprise, then, when, after Fred has been buried under the buddleia, Mrs Spedding's Ginger – toggled in digital watch, top hat and mourning garb



Mrs Cocker's Cat by Philippa Pearce, which was first published in 1976, has recently been reissued with new illustrations by Anthony Maitland (62pp. Viking Kestrel. £5.95. 0 670 80646 3).

A need-to-nag basis

George Szirtes

RAYMOND BRIGGS
Unlucky Wally
48pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95.
0 241 12106 X
JANET AND ALLAN AHLBERG
The Old Joke Book
30pp. Viking Kestrel. £4.95 (paperback, £1.95).
0 670 52273 2
TONY ROSS
Stone Soup
23pp. Anderson. £4.95.
0 86264 161 6
BOB GRAHAM
The Wild
28pp. Blackie. £6.50.
0 216 92094 9

Children's publishers think more and more in terms of packages, especially when it comes to picture books. This could be interpreted as a lack of faith in good writing, or simply as a dearth of the same. The packages become glossier, the texts more vacuous. The snappy artist is in charge.

One hesitates to throw this accusation at Raymond Briggs, who showed an original, daring, sometimes genuinely childlike, mind in two previous books, *The Snowman* and *Fungus the Bogeyman*, and has recently become something of a cause célèbre with *When the Wind Blows* and *The Tin Pot Foreign General*. At least there was no difficulty in seeing what the books were there for: *The Snowman* and *Fungus* for delight, the latter two for instruction. *Unlucky Wally* attempts to return to the mood of the Bogeyman, but lacks invention and is tired and unpleasant. Wally is not only unlucky, but clumsy, smelly, spotty, gormless and boring. He starts that way, and ends that way.

– discloses the history of Fred's other existence once put out at night. The Tom Jones of tom-cats ("Meowowowowowowowow"), he had been "the greatest singer in the world", howling and miaowing them in alleys and backyards with his group The Heavy Saucers. Hence the packed-out, rock-star's funeral service over which Mrs Spedding's Ginger presides ("O caterwailey-wailey-woe"), the lavish wreaths laid on Fred's grave, and the noisy wake (with sardine and fishbone delicacies) among the local dustbins.

Sophie and Nick observe all this wide-eyed: Fred belongs to the genre of the night-ride, the children escaping the known world in an adventure which overturns their tidy assumptions about animal (and human) behaviour. The book's format, largely comic strip but with occasional full-page drawings, is one which bears the hallmarks of Posy Simmonds's *Guardian* column, but readers of Raymond Briggs's work may also be struck by certain similarities: when the children creep downstairs past their sleeping parents there is an eerie echo of *The Snowman*. But the adventure stays close to home, the fantasy element is restrained, and the ending has no truck with the convention that all might have been "just a dream": far from being returned to daylight normality, the house, the garden, even Fred's gravestone are transformed by what has happened during the night. It is a benevolent ending, but not a woefully ambiguous one.

Posy Simmonds has flourished for so long now, by the standard of most newspaper cartoonists, because of a capacity to go on defeating our expectations: where we, as readers, might clamour for more George Weber or Edmund Heep, she has gone on experimenting, and in the process has developed baroque and allegorical forms to offset or contain her social realism. There is no lack of the latter quality in *Fred*: the uncharming but charmingly observed children, horribly convincing in their mixture of companionship and squabbling ("Hey, you got more than me"); their gangling liberal parents; the gentrified urban setting. But it is in the funeral train and ceremonial cat-mourning that the book is most richly imaginative and best exploits an operatic tendency which is coming increasingly to figure in Posy Simmonds's work.

Julia MacRae Books

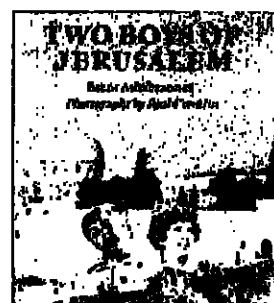


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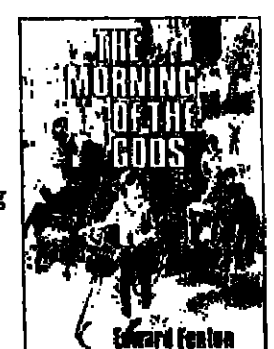


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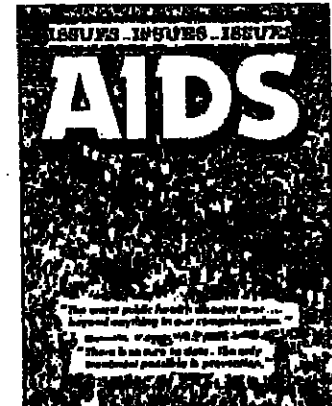
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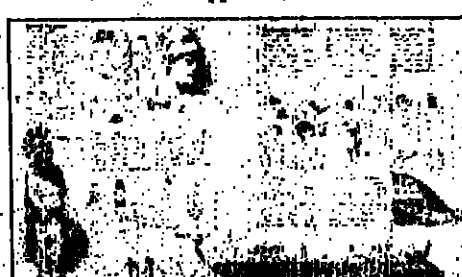


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Simultaneous realities

Lachlan Mackinnon

Aidan Chambers (Editor)
A Quiver of Ghosts
 137pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £3.95.
 0370 31008 X
 JAN MARK
At the Sign of the Dog and Rocket
 123pp. Viking Kestrel. Paperback, £4.50.
 0670 81008 8

Ronald Frame begins his contribution to *A Quiver of Ghosts*, "Some Common Misunderstandings about Ghosts", with "First things first. If you don't believe that ghosts exist, I'd skip this story and go on to the next one." This is frivolous. Ghost stories invite us to suspend disbelief more than usual, and Frame's use of the word "story" suggests that he knows this perfectly well. The point isn't the reality of ghosts but what we can learn from them, as Hamlet discovered. This unusually rewarding collection, marketed as "Teenage Fiction", for the most part appreciates that.

Louise Lawrence's "The Silver Box", a rather obvious story about time travel, plays

with some interesting ideas about simultaneous realities. Joan Aiken's "The End of Silence", which describes a widower's purchase of an owl to replace his wife, explores guilt - whether the intention may be as scarring as the deed. The lingering of the past appears differently in Jill Paton Walsh's "Green Gravel", perhaps the best-written story in the book, in which a couple looking at an old schoolhouse with a view to conversion find, among other things, the bell-rope, which when pulled brings "a tide of children's voices". As they leave, they see the First World War memorial: "Suddenly Jean was crying... not for the childless young men so much, quenched in the mud and chaos, nor even for the long solitudes they left to their girls behind them, but for the laughing and quarrelling and singing children who were not dead, having never been born." George Mackay Brown's "The Tree and the Harp" delightfully crosses the ghost story with a fairy-tale ending but in Aidan Chambers's own "The Tower", Martin Phelps's ability to see what his parents cannot leads close to tragedy.

The most puzzling failure is Jan Mark's "Buzz-Words". Here, the story is told by a teenager to teenagers, and the author's ear for

dialogue makes the foreground as cluttered and interesting as the experience recounted - almost more so, because of its uncanny naturalism. The author has more material than she can dispose in the available space, and it shows.

Happily, Mark has a new novel to offer us, *At the Sign of the Dog and Rocket*. Lilian leaves school to help in the family pub. Her mother and tiresome siblings are going on holiday, so she will not have much to do, but her father's slipped disc complicates matters. The temporary summer help turns out to be Tom Collins, a student teacher she and her friends used to send up mercilessly. The core of the novel is a slowly evolving love-story, in which questions of tact, trust and respect are sensitively touched on. The open-endedness of the plot shows this author's characteristic concern to make the book an experience rather than a closed object. It is packed with incidental characters of surprising variety and authenticity. It is also full of detail about work - serving, bottling up, cooking, closing and so forth - which is intrinsically gripping. This light, refreshing book can only add to a deserved reputation and make us look forward to whatever Jan Mark writes next.

Paperbacks in brief

Stephanie Nettell

MYRON LEVOY. *Pictures of Adam*. 217pp. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 31055 1. □ First published 1986. All the ingredients of a typical American teenage novel - heart-tugging sentiment, disturbed youngster, swinging first-person narrative - are transformed by sincerity and a brisk style into a well-paced and affecting story. Fourteen-year-old Lisa, with her passion for photojournalism, is amazed to find herself drawn to shabby, awkward Adam, whom no one wants to sit beside. Her account of how she helps him face the reality of his troubled life without escaping into his fantasies of being a space alien, is both exciting and moving. (Over 13.)

PETER DICKINSON. *Amerian Pit*. 172pp. Puffin. £1.95. 0 14 031042 8. □ First published 1977. This is vintage Dickinson, a three-layered adventure of consummate skill: a semi-political thriller, an eerie fantasy about the primeval

emotions of the wounded earth lingering in the depths of an old mine, and a perceptive portrayal of the heightened senses of a blind boy to whom the blackness of the pit is no darker than his usual day. (11-15.) *A Box of Nothing*. Illustrated by Ian Newsham. 128pp. Magnet. £1.75. 0 416 96630 6. First published 1985. Philosophy, puns, and a cheerfully inventive twisting of reality - recurring features in stories by Peter Dickinson - make up this tale of magic and dream for ten-year-olds who are as bright as its hero and as undaunted by this edition's cramped print as he is by the terrors of the Dump which he and his patched-up Burra Council fight together. (10-12.)

LOIS LOWRY. *Anastasia Krupnik*. 118pp. 0 00 672635 6. First published 1979. *Anastasia Again!* 155pp. 0 00 672636 4. First published 1981. Fontana Lions. £1.75 each. □ *Anastasia* may be alarmingly precocious but she is also refreshing, witty and hard to resist. In theory her intellectual family (father a professor of literature, mother a painter, toddler brother a

verbal genius even if he is not yet potty-trained) should be irritating, but in practice their sharp dialogue, anxieties and escapades are unfailingly funny. *Anastasia*, an American newcomer to Britain, is to be warmly welcomed. She will appeal not only to her own age-group of embattled ten-to-twelves but to older readers looking wryly back. (10-14.)

G. K. CHESTERTON. *The Puffin Father Brown Stories*. 176pp. Puffin. £1.50. 0 14 035082 9. □ First published 1911-1935. The somewhat cumbrous humour of the period, like an overcoat that is too long, begins to feel comfortable and right even to a new young reader after the first couple of stories, in an introductory collection of seven of the strongest tales about the classic detective. (Over 11.)

ROBERT CORMIER. *Beyond the Chocolate War*. 279pp. Fontana Lions. £2.25. 0 00 672681 X. □ First published 1985. It may not be technically necessary to have read *The Chocolate War*, but it will make this searing, painful book a little easier to understand if the reader knows the kind of viciousness and moral corruption that envelops Trinity High School. By following the fears and twisted dreams of a group of teenage boys circling around the arrogant power of Archie Costello, leader of the Vigils gang, Cormier points to the source of evil in those who acquiesce as well as in those who command. As in the earlier novel, there is an intellectually demanding book behind the disturbing rush of action. (Over 13.)

KATE GILMORE. *Of Griffins and Graffiti*. 157pp. Puffin. £1.95. 0 14 032134 9. □ First published 1987. Bored with the anonymity of life in a New York City high school, four "so-called middle-class" art students long for the excitement of literally painting the town but are not bold enough to take on the tough graffiti battles of the railyards (the black boy's father is a judge, and a strict one). In the end, the plan they almost accidentally evolve turns out to be just as breathtaking and provides a tense and sophisticatedly amusing first novel for teenagers. (Over 13.)

ROBERT LEESON. *Wheel of Danger*. Illustrated by Anthony Kerins. 95pp. Collins. £3.95. 0 00 184791 0. □ First published 1986. Leeson knows how to spin a contemporary story, weaving in some danger here, some humour there, against a recognisable background of family and school life. The old gang are growing up, rearranging friendships while the adult world, with a hint of crime and racial tensions, impinges more and more, but there is time for one last childhood adventure up on the moors, as they seek to regenerate an old cotton mill and the whirling lives it represents. Told in a loose, colloquial style (which allows children to speak) by one of the boys, it is an easy, entertaining and gently moral read. (10-15.)

Intertextual enticements

Colin Greenland

Aidan Chambers
Now I Know
 238pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £4.50.
 0370 30773 4

With a cover design incorporating two obliquely discreet crosses, and a catechumenal blurb, Aidan Chambers's new novel will probably find its most ready audience among young Christians. In fact it offers very little preaching to the converted, and may well disturb some devout teenagers, challenging their assumptions if not their faith. Its zeal is for integrity, not salvation.

Now I Know is the story of an experimental Christian belief by a "clever, curious and committed" seventeen-year-old called Nik, hounded by his history teacher into doing the research for an amateur film project about the Second Coming. In the course of his observations he meets and falls in love with nineteen-year-old Christian feminist called Julie. This, naturally enough, makes his purpose more personal, and a matter of life and death when, on the morning after she has thoughtfully rejected his sexual advance, Nik sees her injured in the blast of a terrorist bomb. His response leads him swiftly to a bizarre experiment in self-induced mystical experience and he stage-manages his own crucifixion in a scrap-yard.

Until this last turn, the synopsis sounds ideal for a routinely edifying Christian novel, from which Chambers is at pains to distinguish his book. *Now I Know* contains no evangelism, nor any evangelical characters. Julie herself identifies the urge to convert as a selfish one, and an easy temptation. The author avoids pre-empting his readers' responses by means of a variety of alienation effects. He dispenses authority by assembling the text out of extracts from Nik's notes and tapes made by Julie from her hospital bed, as well as conventional third person narration of their actions, and includes the story of Thomas Thripp, an ambitious and incipiently corrupt young policeman investigating a report of the crucifixion: an apparent case of grievous bodily harm. Chambers also readily - some will feel too readily - interrupts everyone to present Nik's excitable digressions into numerology, puns, poems and doodles and his own quotations from Joyce, Jung and the Book of Job: intertextual enticements to further reading.

In this ambience of overt artifice, readers are invited to participate in the parallel enquiries, intellectual, spiritual and forensic, as components of the reading process. They are required to accept two or three palpable manipulations of plot and plenty of subtle disquisition, but never an assertion of values, let alone truth. Chambers's title quotes Nik assessing his own experiences, but it is perfectly possible, if frustrating, to interpret this as the story of a bright, sensitive, lonely boy lured into insanity by cynicism and erotic trauma.

Nik is vulnerable and vulnerable and ready to take risks with his life and what he expects of it. For this reason, and because of the free play of the narrative in and out of his consciousness, his character does not have a clear outline. Julie, on the other hand, is obsessively concerned with demarcation of herself, not least while she lies helpless in the existential void of a hospital bed, first, last and always in relation to God. She is as frank and hard-headed about that as about everything else. Her two presidential advisers are Simone Weil and Dame Julian of Norwich, who reinforces her ambitious notion that she can feminize Christianity by changing the divine pronoun - though the Septent, Julie insists, "was a he".

Readers of a secular persuasion may deplore Julie's chosen application of her ferocious rationalism, and her decision that her intimacy with God precludes sexual love, by which, she believes, "two people come together and make themselves one", but these are autonomous choices, with no designs on Nik, or on us. The conclusions at which Nik arrives, however, through his own style of self-absentment, are unpredictable, unorthodox and entirely plausible. He drops his own bombshell and emerges reshaped but intact, changed but unconverted.

Telling it like it ain't

D. J. Enright

Julius Lester
The Tales of Uncle Remus: The adventures of Brer Rabbit
 Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney
 51pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.
 08037 0271 X

The Uncle Remus tales of Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) are "a cornerstone of Afro-American culture", Julius Lester declares in the introduction to his retellings, and they "partake of that quality of magic found in myth". But they won't quite do these days.

Harris was a folklorist of integrity; and while Uncle Remus represents the "faithful dorky" who has happy memories of slavery, there is - Lester says - no inaccuracy there, since many heads fells felt much the same. Unfortunately Uncle Remus achieved fame and was used as a retrospective justification for slavery, enabling whites "to look to the future free of guilt about the past". In particular, the present-day reader will be upset by Uncle Remus's "sycophancy".

Somewhat similarly, although Harris made "a conscious and diligent effort" to put the language of nineteenth-century Southern blacks down on paper, the modern reader is offended by the dialect. If, that is, the reader is able to decipher it, since it is "almost like reading a foreign language". There at least I am at liberty to disagree: we soon get the hang of the language, as with Synge's Anglo-Irish. Offensive I suppose we must allow it to be, should one sole person in the world despise people who talk like this: "I hear tell you gwine ter sen' me 'struckshun, en nab my famby, en 'stroy my shanty" (Harris, "The Fate of Mr Jack Sparrow"), instead of like this: "What's this I hear about you going to beat me up, beat my wife up, beat my children up, and tear my house down?" (Lester, "Mr Jack Sparrow Meets His End").

Lester's intention is to make the stories accessible again, in condominiums and on front porches, in the North and in the South, by employing a "modified contemporary Southern-black English". In brief, he does not propose to rewrite history, only to rewrite Joel Chandler Harris. In his generosity he suggests that, since the tale itself is what counts, we should feel free to tell it in our own language if

our language differs from his.

The most famous of the tales has it that one day

Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentine, en fix up a contrapshun what he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer ter see wat de news wuz gwine ter be. En he didn't haeter wait long, nudder, kaze bimbeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road - lipply-clippity, clippity-lipply - des ez sassy ez a jay-bird.

As now retold, somewhat austere, Brer Fox mixed up a big batch of tar and made it into the shape of a baby. By the time he finished, Brer Sun was yawning himself awake and peeping once eye over the topside of the earth.

Brer Fox took his Tar Baby down to the road, the very road Brer Rabbit walked along every morning. He sat the Tar Baby in the road, put a hat on it, and then hid in a ditch.

He had scarcely gotten comfortable (as comfortable as one can get in a ditch), before Brer Rabbit came strutting along like he owned the world and was collecting rent from everybody in it.

Later, when Brer Rabbit has thumped the dumbly insolent Tar-Baby for the second time and got both his fists stuck,

"Tu'n me loose, 'fo' I klick de natal stuffin' outen you", sez Brer Rabbit, sezze, but de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nuthin'. She dos hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox, he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he built 'er crankshaft. En den he butted, on his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox, he sa'ntered fort', lookin' des ez innercent ez wunner 'yo' mammy's mockin'-birds.

Lester puts it this way:

Brer Rabbit was sho' nuf' mad now. "You turn me loose or I'll make you wish you'd never been born." THUNK! He kicked the Tar Baby and his foot was caught. He was cussing and carrying on something terrible and kicked the Tar Baby with the other foot and THUNK! That foot was caught. "You let me go or I'll butt you with my head." He butted the Tar Baby under the chin and THUNK! His head was stuck.

Brer Fox sauntered out of the ditch just as cool as the sweat on the side of a glass of ice tea.

The ice tea is a nice touch. Mammy's mockingbirds had to go since the little white boy to whom Uncle Remus was telling the stories has vanished from the scene - perhaps because Lester doesn't care for the cosy relationship between the two or because he thinks, rightly or wrongly, that in the boy's absence the tale will address itself more immediately to its real-life audience. His explicit objection is that, as

they stand, the stories may lead one to suppose that the purpose of black folk-tales was to entertain little white children.

Harris ends with the old man declining to answer the boy's question as to whether the fox ate the rabbit: maybe he did, maybe he didn't, but "I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run long." Lacking the benefit of Miss Sally, Lester continues, quite logically, with what was a later story, about the briar patch and Brer Rabbit's subsequent escape. His young readers or listeners won't be left in horrid suspense.

For his race against Brer Tarrypin (now Brer Turtle), Brer Rabbit originally turned up "wid ribbons tied 'roun' his neck en streamin' fum his years". In Lester, more garishly, or more fashionably, he is wearing "a gold jogging suit with a tan stripe" and "emerald-green racing shorts" underneath. The old Brer Rabbit just "lit out on de race", but the new model takes off "like a 747 jet". Brer Tarrypin/Turtle wins because members of his family, indistinguishable one from another, are strung out along the route, so that one of them is always ahead of Brer Rabbit. Harris concludes with a touch of comic moralizing, as the little boy observes dolefully that Tarrypin cheated. "Co'se, honey", Uncle Remus replies, explaining that first the animals cheated and then folk took it up and it kept on spreading. "Hit mighty ketchin', en you mine 'yo' eye, honey, dat somebody don't cheat you 'fo' 'yo' hn't gil grey ez de ole nigger's."

None of this survives in Lester, neither the "nigger", understandably enough, nor the humorous sophistication. Simply, Brer Turtle takes the prize money and goes home: which is sophisticated merely in implying that winning is what matters and never mind how; it's what these days we call private enterprise. My guess is that children - and even some adults - would still get more pleasure from Harris's rounding-off, in discreetly modified terminology.

Once people have been told that something or other will offend them, then they feel in honour bound to take umbrage. And that's that; there is no excuse, no court of appeal, no redress. Here it is probably best to forget the rationale and approach Lester's versions in the spirit in which we accept Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The distinctive flavour of the language has largely gone, along with both its charms and its problems, but there remains an entertaining and instructive story never wholly stripped of its mythical quality.

to Ithaca; but Dick King-Smith's mongrel with the horrendous bark in "The Guard Dog" is just another ugly duckling made good. Leon Garfield's tingling prose ("I saw the grass shiver and I knew she'd gone back to her bones") distinguishes a rather plain anecdote of dog striving to save master from a seductive lady ghost. Quite the best of the four-legged guardians is Peter Dickinson's "Barker". He is one of those animals left a fortune by an eccentric mistress with no immediate family. Luckily, he is also made the guardian of young Molly, who can interpret his wishes. Natural justice is impeccably served by Barker and Molly acting together, and hordes of distant relatives are frustrated in a little fantasy which rings the changes on the idea of guardianship more effectively than many stories in an inevitably mixed collection.

An Overpraised Season (175pp. Bodley Head. Paperback, £3.95. 0 370 30758 5), a collection of ten stories selected by Charlotte Zolotow, was first published in 1974 and reviewed in the TLS of December 6 that year. The title is taken from Samuel Butler - "To me it seems that youth is like spring, an overpraised season" - but although, as grouped, these stories are intended for teenage readers, they were not originally written for any particular market (four - by Elizabeth Taylor, Elizabeth Enright, Nathaniel Benchley and John Updike - were first published in the *New Yorker*). Each story, in the words of the blurb, "presents some aspect of the emotional confrontation between the young and other people". The other authors are H. E. Bates, James Gould Cozzens, Merrill Joan Gerber, Doris Lessing, Kurt Vonnegut and Jessamyn West.

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Tales of not so long ago

Gillian Avery

JACK ZIPES (Editor)
Victorian Fairy Tales: The revolt of the fairies and elves
 381pp. Methuen, £18.95.
 041642080 X

Children's books have always suffered from the ideologies of the day. The unparalleled flowering of fairy tales and fantasy in Victorian England can be explained partly by a new desire to recapture childhood and partly by a general feeling of release from the bondage of the Puritan doctrine (to which the evangelicals also subscribed) that works of the imagination were evil, and the utilitarian insistence that they were unprofitable. By 1846 Grimms' Tales and the stories of Hans Andersen had made their appearance, and these worked on the imagination of writers far more than Perrault's ever had, presumably because the literary in England now had an appetite for what we must loosely call fairy tales. The range of styles was very great, from the burlesque of *The Rose and the Ring* to the chaotic moralizing of *The Water Babies*; from the dispassionate logic of Lewis Carroll to the romance of Andrew Lang's *The Gold of Fairies* with its themes derived from Border ballads; from the plethora of Andersen imitators to the uniqueness of George MacDonald. It was an excellent idea therefore to gather up some of the short stories of the period as Jack Zipes has now

done in *Victorian Fairy Tales*. As one would have expected from the author of *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, the editorial emphasis is on ideology rather than on literary qualities. Taking as his starting point Humphrey Carpenter's essays on Victorian children's writers, *Secret Gardens*, Zipes seeks the utopian ideal that motivated each of his chosen twenty-two and concludes that for many of them it was rebellion against the society of their time. The trouble is that a couple of paragraphs of biographical introduction to each story are not enough to convey the particular viewpoint of its author, especially with individuals as complex as George MacDonald or as perplexing as Lewis Carroll, and these snippets and the introduction give the impression that the editor approaches the Victorians as curious animals in a menagerie whom until this moment he has only cursorily inspected and among whom he treads warily.

But the stories themselves make a fine collection. Zipes includes accessible items such as "The King of the Golden River", Wilde's "The Happy Prince" and Grahame's "The Reluctant Dragon", as well as some interesting rarities. There is Cruikshank's temperance version of Cinderella, and Lucy Clifford's "Wooden Tony", the story of a seemingly autistic child, unable to communicate, who feels himself turning into wood. Like other of Mrs Clifford's *Anyhow Stories* (which were apparently composed for the benefit of her own small children), it is disturbing in its suggestion of the fragility of the everyday world and the unseen forces that lurk beyond it. There is also Mrs

Molesworth's "Story of a King's Daughter", which describes how a violent and cruel prince has to learn compassion before he can wed his princess – a poignant story when one remembers that Mrs Molesworth's own marriage ended in separation from a violent husband.

Undoubtedly the most powerful is MacDonald's "The Day Boy and the Night Girl", an eloquent parable about the polarity of male and female; and one of Zipes's most interesting points is the emphasis placed by writers of both sexes on female self-determination. This could range from the resistance to conformity demonstrated by Princess Ursula in Mary de Morgan's "The Toy Princess" (not, incidentally, "A Toy Princess") to Juliana Horatia Ewing's resourceful Managing Molly, a female Jack the Giantkiller, in "The Ogre Courting"; but it also could take the form of a masochistic insistence – much practised by Charlotte

Yonge and represented here by Childe-Pemberton's "All My Doing or Not Riding-Hood Over Again" – that women are to blame for nearly everything. Zipes has missed a trick by representing Edward Lear's bull-Hugessen only by the milk-and-honey used his counterblast to feminism, "The Pig-faced Queen", a satirical account of Lear's artistic taste, private incomes and slightly sickening interlockings of familial and sexual intrigue – all of which rather resembles the fictional world of Iris Murdoch, and is similarly liable to awaken levelling sentiments in the most bourgeois of critics. There is a second, stronger resemblance: in a rather more effective and economical way than Murdoch's novels, *Trust* is a moral tale, in which solidarity between the more or less virtuous makes it possible for them to capture, against the odds, some moments of pleasure in a world in which the selfish and unreliable usually make the running. Exile and separation become more plausible, of course, if the characters belong to a social stratum in which airline tickets can be more or less automatically afforded, and the temporary destruction of lawyer Charles's career is only possible in a world in which wealthy intriguers can cost his employers real money. It is the fact that the rich have more money that makes them different from you and me, and that also makes them convenient pawns in Mary Flanagan's game of moral chess.

Forms of the familiar

Edward Blishen

EVA MARTIN
Tales of the Far North
 Illustrated by Laszlo Gal
 123pp. Methuen, £6.95.
 041695650 5

Tales of the Far North is a charming book, inexpensive for what it is, that turns out somehow not quite what it proclaims itself to be. Here are fairy tales with British, French and Irish roots, as they were recalled and recounted by Canadian settlers. Eva Martin, who has made the collection, says they appear here as recorded by folklorists in the early part of the century, and are taken from sources in the second and third generations. The isolation of the early communities, she holds, makes it certain that many of the stories will have retained their original purity. But with two or three generations of storytellers at work, that is clearly too much to claim. In defence of the freedom with which she herself retells her chosen stories, she quotes Italo Calvino: "The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added." It would be rash to look for purity, though perfectly sensible to look for interesting and unfamiliar kinds of imagery.

Martin argues that the stories are affected by

their new environment, as seen especially in the dominant presence of the bear... where strange and fearsome creatures prowled". But there are no fairy tales to be found without forests: Europe has its own both those of the real world and those of the imagination. There is no point in any of the stories where, in this respect, a reader can easily sense that he was on one side of the Atlantic rather than the other.

But that said, here are some enchanting, unfamiliar forms of the familiar. Oddly, first, "The Healing Spring", picked up in New Scotia, seems neither British, French nor Irish in origin, but Scandinavian. That is to say, it is plainly related to Hans Andersen's "The Claus and Big Claus", which Andersen said had never come across except in its Danish form. It has a dying fall, found in a number of the tales, as if memory fumbled with the max. "Three Golden Hairs", from New Brunswick, has elements of "Jack and the Beanstalk"; and in "Beauty and the Beast", the French tradition, Beauty is a prince, the Beast a gradually disenchanted prince possessing a sort of magic styptic with which she reassembles him after numerous dismemberments. This is perhaps the only tale in which assorted giants play baseball, and the hero as the ball. The illustrations by Laszlo Gal are poetic and blunt at once.

A troubled zoo

"Copious and available and full of animals", remarked Roy Fuller of modern poetry in the preface to his enlightening anthology, *Fellow Mortals* (1981), which duly excluded most of it in favour of restoring such items as J. C. Squire's moving "To a Bull-dog".

Although one could not tell it from the manic illustration which awkwardly breaks up the first-person "Seven Flies", Fuller is one of the many moderns to whom Anne Harvey has turned for an anthology whose title suggests an essentially domestic world – one that can be as vexing as any jungle or crowded train.

Of *Caterpillars, Cats and Cattle: Poems about animals*, edited by Anne Harvey (£23.95, Viking Kestrel, £6.95, 0 670 81218 8) shows some good taste, with a propensity for solid Georgians (F. W. Harvey appears twice), but the impression which it leaves is of a troubled zoo in which the beasts have been gathered together against their will. The opening section, titled from Larkin's phrase "Earth's Im-

measurable Surprise", certainly provides shock: it is heralded by "Lark", a soggy Crete piece, whose author, the late Lesley Crete, an Inspector of Schools, survives more than eight times – a total exceeded only by Walter de la Mare.

Cowper and Hardy bear it others, they used to such exhibition; stochers feel – for they are, they would rather be burrowing their natural habitat; and for some it is a cruel: the squibs by Micheline Wandor, John Houston and Roma Campbell, pale beside bursts of Ogden Nash. Lawrence's "Baby toise" is a case for the RSPCA – several of tions have fallen from its back in transit, and would surely have been an easy enough matter for the permissions department to track down John Whitworth rather than snatch "The Toad in the Road at Ploccadilly" and hope that he would be in touch.

Christopher Hawes

INDEX OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS REVIEWED

Ahlberg, Janet and Allan. *The Old Joke Book* 357
 Allen, Judy. *Travelling Hopefully* 355
 Anio Mlammas. *The Earth Is a Squirrel* 356
 Briggs, Raymond. *Unlucky Wally* 357
 Butler, Francis, and Richard Rotter (Editors). *Triumph of the Spirit in Children's Literature* 354
 Carls, Nancy White. *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* 356
 Chambers, Allan (Editor). *A Quiver of Ghosts* 358
 Chambers, Allan. *Now I Know* 358
 Dineen, Rhona. *If You Were a Bird* 356
 Graham, Bob. *The Wild* 357
 Harvey, Anne (Editor). *Of Caterpillars, Cats and Cattle* 356
 Jones, David. *The Magic of the Moon* 357
 Lester, Julius. *The Tales of Uncle Remus* 359
 Mark, Jan. *At the Sign of the Dog and Rocket* 359
 Morris, Jean. *The Troy Game* 355
 Nettell, Stephanie (Editor). *Guardian Angels* 357
 Nichol, B. P. *Once: A Lullaby* 356
 Ross, Tony. *Stone Soup* 357
 Seymour, Peter. *Discovering Our Past: Exploring the Solar System. Learn About Your Body* 356
 Simmonds, Poy. *Fred* 357
 Wilson, A. N. *Siray* 355
 Winthrop, Elizabeth. *Shoes* 356
 Wooden, Warren W. *Children's Literature in English Renaissance* 354
 Zipes, Jack (Editor). *Victorian Fairy Tales: The revolt of the fairies and elves* 360

Moral chess

Roz Kaveney

MARY FLANAGAN
Trust
 292pp. Bloomsbury, £10.95.
 074750001 0

Classical high-fliers, the characters in *Trust* inhabit a world of high sensibility, profitable artistic taste, private incomes and slightly sickening interlockings of familial and sexual intrigue – all of which rather resembles the fictional world of Iris Murdoch, and is similarly liable to awaken levelling sentiments in the most bourgeois of critics. There is a second, stronger resemblance: in a rather more effective and economical way than Murdoch's novels, *Trust* is a moral tale, in which solidarity between the more or less virtuous makes it possible for them to capture, against the odds, some moments of pleasure in a world in which the selfish and unreliable usually make the running. Exile and separation become more plausible, of course, if the characters belong to a social stratum in which airline tickets can be more or less automatically afforded, and the temporary destruction of lawyer Charles's career is only possible in a world in which wealthy intriguers can cost his employers real money. It is the fact that the rich have more money that makes them different from you and me, and that also makes them convenient pawns in Mary Flanagan's game of moral chess.

The plot is motivated by rather more McGuffins than most writers would find necessary – the trust-fund established by the dying Eleanor for Clover, daughter of her estranged

artist lover Jason; the Teniers painting sold by Felix, art dealer and fence, lover first of Eleanor then of Clover; to Monica, Charles's cousin and Clover's mother; the large oil, embodying Jason's crack-brained ascetic theories of abstraction, on which he tinkers for years. It depends on various unlikely renunciations, made less unlikely by Flanagan's eye for neurotic behaviour. This is a novel in which objects, things and atmospheres are important, particularly the atmospheres of defeat, at which Flanagan turns out to be particularly good – Monica's useless pieties in Brompton Oratory, the Paris pension where Eleanor struggles to take up the viola, the remote Utah truckstop where Jason and Clover felix up after his discovery of her affair with Felix has made him wreck his New York show.

Flanagan tactfully keeps the nastier of her villains – Monica's husband, Jason's gallery-owner – largely offstage; for her, virtue includes a capacity to be passive and endure (which many readers will grudge and find wimpy), and she has the sense to know that too much of the ghastly and demonic will stop us appreciating such sterling virtues on the part of Charles as his capacity to avoid feeling persecuted even when he is being. Felix, the only one of the real villains we see, is convincingly the object of erotic interest from the two heroines – Flanagan manages succinctly to make what happens in bed matter as part of the novel, rather than something we leer over or skip. Her plot might sound staid and melodramatic in summary, but her handling of the emotional states of the characters she puts through its elaborate movements makes it something else entirely.

With the years

Isabel Scholes

MARY MELWOOD
Reflections in Black Glass
 222pp. Deutsch, £9.95.
 023397956 5

"It's only land that lasts, the only way we'll last is when we're buried in it." The speaker, Bella Dashby, is in her own estimation "a practical person". She has married her cousin Cyrus; they have one child and then practise "keeping away", devoting themselves instead to enlarging their estate.

To Clio, poor relation and wife of Cyrus's feckless half-brother, Archie, Bella dispenses her own form of charity, demanding in return an audience for her bigoted views. "Snapping, yelling, blunder[ing]", Bella becomes increasingly outrageous, growing "so faint with fury" when she spots her car being driven without permission that she has to be supported into the nearest teashop, where she sits grinding her teeth, "her lips trembling on her cup". Such a reaction reinforces Bella's cartoon-like aspect, and by the time she shamefacedly announces the failure of "keeping away", the second pregnancy which she has "reckoned on a cow calendar", the comic tone of Mary Melwood's novel seems immutably set.

Yet after the death of Bella's baby the emphasis changes and Clio, tormented by her fear of ageing, becomes the focus of attention. Her swift changes in mood from black wrath to sorrowful repentance are feelingly described as the trick, after raving through the house "with cards and dominoes to bridge a gulf which had opened". Yet Melwood is less successful when she tries to get at the heart of Clio's sadness, and a crucial passage dwindles into cliché – "she knew herself to be one who looked for the fly in every ointment, and saw in a hero only his feet of clay".

Bella, meanwhile, still grieving for her child, chooses a characteristically graceless death,

A Love Affair, Dino Buzzati's novel (1963) about an ageing man's obsession with a young prostitute, has recently been reissued in a translation by Joseph Green which first appeared in the UK in 1965 (299pp. Carcanet, £9.95, 0 85635 586 0). Of this version the TLS commented: "The English translation prefers American spelling and terminology and often seems too literally rendered from the Italian".

drowning in "hardly an inch of water" in Black Glass, the marshland claimed by both Cyrus and Archie. Thinking over Bella's death, Clio regrets her failure to understand "one who had been secretly so sad". That Clio, not noted for her powers of observation (her daughter's headmaster has to tell her that the child is seriously disturbed) did not foresee Bella's death is credible enough, but to the reader there is something rather contrived, even obdurate about the ending, which mars an otherwise interesting book. Its most successful scenes invariably feature Martha, the domestic, and her backward daughter Loona, who pry and snigger and spill things, meeting out "admonitory spot[s] of rum butter" on the clothes of unwelcome guests; Bella, "cool in silk" of Tory blue, and Clio, the survivor of the final chapter, heaping her fire with apple twigs. "Their smoky fragrance seal[ing] the hour in her mind" as she comes to terms with her daughter's marriage and a future alone with Archie, still "not able to accept the change which came with years".

Printing subversion

Augusto Roa Bastos' *Yo el supremo* was first published in South America in 1974, was reviewed in the TLS on August 15, 1975 and now appears in English translation (433pp. Faber, £9.95, 0 571 14626 0). Roa Bastos is Paraguayan, but, inevitably, an exile from that dictator-locked country, and the subject of his extraordinary novel is the maddest and most famous of its historical oppressors, the nineteenth-century Dr Francia. But this is historical fiction of an odd kind for, in the words of the original reviewer, Jean Franco, Roa Bastos "converts the material ordinarily used in historical discourse – documents, records, travel accounts, decrees – into the infrastructure of fiction", so that what we read, in prose of a sustained ebullience and inventiveness, "are the ramblings and lucubrations of the bizarre".

The real Francia was both severe and secretive, a warped child of the European Enlightenment who took knowledge to be also political power. "Roa Bastos's brilliant idea is to let the supreme dictator talk back. The author... pieces together the other side of the history, which is not only that of a country's isolation but that of the dictator himself. The irony is that this 'supreme'... is finally at the mercy

Body talk

Andrew Hislop

FAROOQ KHALID
Black Mirrors
 Translated by Eric Cyprian
 285pp. Cape, £10.95.
 022402382 9

Use dulls metaphors, disarms them. Today's conceit, which may shock and titillate, becomes tomorrow's "natural" expression of the order of things. Paradoxically, the very fluency of native speakers encourages ignorance of metaphorical origins, while foreigners in their struggle to find words are sometimes more aware of their "literal" meaning.

Farooq Khalid's *Black Mirrors*, an extraordinarily twisted *ronde* of a novel set in Pakistan, part metaphysical black mystery tale, part philosophical, comically seedy soap, continually confronts the reader with the rough texture of its metaphors, the shock of its brutal associations. It makes us foreigners in our own language. This is, of course, in part because it is translated from the Urdu, and often seems to prefer exact renderings to English colloquialisms so that the metaphorical does sound foreign to us: "the sweetness in the foundation of mankind is very quickly consumed"; "in his mind ideas wept"; "all forms of truth were mingling promiscuously with fantasy and illusion"; "he... felt as if he had drunk the menstrual blood of a prostitute".

Regardless of the problems of translation, however, *Black Mirrors* is itself an extended exploration of the metaphorical. The clash and collusion of characters in bizarre encounters which redefine their concept of themselves is bound up with a continual forging of strange verbal associations, with which they seek to discover, or to mask, their relationship with the world. The point of departure for this displacement of both characters and of language is "the body", whose significance, both as a physical agent and as a metaphorical battleground for understanding the meaning and morality of desire, permeates *Black Mirrors*.

The book opens in the foul bathrooms of a cheap, run-down hotel which is full of "displaced" persons. The interlocking of the literal and the metaphorical roles of the body is immediately apparent. The ill-built bathrooms both reveal to onlookers the bodies of the bathers and have walls which themselves are like voyeuristic "sex-starved girls". Outside them the body of a dead child is found. From this beginning a web of interlocking events unfolds in an atmosphere of depravity and fantasy, rage and intrigue ("everything was suffocated in black ill-omened air"), tempered by the guilt and the desire for illumination of the least noxious characters.

There is a first-person narrator, Munir, friend of the pathetically self-deprecating Aziz, who is an inhabitant of the hotel, but he is

repeatedly displaced by a third-person narrative. The dominant character is another resident, the philosopher-moralist Fiaz, who ponders the parenthood of the child and the nature of time and religion. He himself denies a prostitute's claim that he is the father of her son, whom she had adopted. The prostitute pays Gaman, a gangster resident, to kill Fiaz, but is herself killed by him. The son, Bashir, an associate of Gaman, seeks out Fiaz, who has become involved with the monstrous Arif, the deceitful seducer of the pregnant mother of the dead child. Bashir attacks Arif who, because he was in love with another girl, Riffat, had tried to get him to sleep with his deaf and dumb wife, Kulsoom ("She is merely a shirt that I sometimes wear"). Riffat is saved from Arif when the hotel's rich artist (who has "Love Can Wait, But Lust Cannot" written on his door) pays her dowry.

Such strands of plot, of which the above are but a few, do not, as the summary might suggest, neatly interlock to form a sensationalist, if complex romance; they themselves are repeatedly broken up by the characters' metaphorical and metaphysical struggles with language, particularly in its relation to "the body". In a dream Fiaz sees words "with broken arms, deformed legs, weak, writhing bodies"; Aziz speaks of a girl's hair "that could listen to you". Bashir, whose name "sounds like one of one's bones being scratched with a knife", wants a girl so "I will watch the reflections of my words on her body". A group of sexually frustrated men are described as having "woven a hateful net of the dirty, sinking fibre of words which trapped yet falsely consoled them". Arif declares "I sleep with pregnant women and foster dumb sins".

No doubt, the metaphorical possibilities of Khalid's native tongue are responsible for what seems to be the shock of the new in some of his conceits. But *Black Mirrors* seems born of an imagination whose associations would startle in any language, and whose metaphors would never age easily into "naturalness".



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Conjugal disturbance

N. S. Thompson

MARTA MORAZZONI
La ragazza col turbante
173pp. Milan: Longanesi. L18.000.
88 304 0625 2

It is surprising to find a writer starting a career with a collection of historical short stories, even more so when they exhibit the finish of these five by Marta Morazzoni, who comes from the Milan region. Leonardo Sciascia's début was one such collection, but his interest was sociological and political. What interests Morazzoni is psychology – even though she eschews analysis in favour of description. Detail is visual (interiors, landscapes, the effects of pain) but calculated omissions create mystery and suspense which, together with deliberate historical distortion, lead to effects of suspended time.

Conjugal relations and cruelty are major themes, depicted in a disciplined, detached language, and framed by pseudo-historical narratives. Three stories are set in Vienna. Mozart did not die in a sumptuous hunting lodge donated by an anonymous patron, but Morazzoni's young-old composer struggling to finish his *Requiem* very closely resembles him (even if he remains unnamed). Tormented by premonitions of death, he is paid an unexpected visit by his wife, Costanza, whose reaction to his state of mind is the hinge on which "La porta bianca" turns. Lorenzo Da Ponte's *Autobiography* tells us of his *entrée* into the world of opera, but not of the incident narrated in "La dignità del signor Da Ponte". Another account of Viennese marriage, circa 1910, in "L'ordine della casa", records the attitude of a

proud *bourgeoise*, whose rigid respectability is shattered when her husband is suddenly paralysed by a stroke. Rather than exhibit his afflicted body in public, she opts for an internal world of order – or is refusing him access to the outside world an act of vengeance for his unforgettably disruptive malady?

Conjugal relations are again disturbed in the title story, set in Holland in 1658, when an exquisite portrait (unnamed, but revealed as Vermeer's "Girl with a Turban" on the cover) threatens to come between a prosperous art dealer and his pregnant wife, who has grown jealous of the affection he shows for it. Although nervous about her condition, she allows him the adventure of sailing with it to Denmark and a prospective client, knowing that at least she will be rid of her "rival", whose dress she wittingly or unwittingly imitates on his departure. This marriage portrait of the Van Rijks is cleverly framed by the situation of their offspring, forty years later, who, thinking of marriage himself (having shown the same enthusiasm for his father's business) is made an unexpected offer. But what caused the man to postpone writing to his wife during the voyage and sojourn with his noble client?

Parallels with Dutch seventeenth-century painting immediately spring to mind for the technique of these stories: there is no superfluous stage property, the narratives proceed calmly and inexorably, concealing and revealing, in a series of highly charged scenes, the thoughts and actions that lead to the unwelcome or unhelpful conclusion. We are made to feel the weight of the flesh, the world and, above all, the passing or pressure of time. There is an almost frightening resignation, but the brilliance of its depiction makes for a very impressive début.

Choice over chance

Jonathan Hunt

GIOVANNI ARPINO
Passo d'addio
157pp. Turin: Einaudi. L18.000.
88 06 593609

Giovanni Arpino once described himself as a novelist interested in exploring the sources of human unhappiness. This interest is very evident in his latest novel, *Passo d'addio*, where he confronts the theme of old age as it is experienced in modern industrial society. Written with Arpino's customary elegance and concision, the novel is a good illustration of the tension in his work between a strong belief in the value and dignity of human reason and a deep mistrust of over-intellectualism. The central theme is handled with sensitivity and clarity,

and the criticism of society that emerges is both striking and convincing.

The plot of *Passo d'addio* revolves around an old man's wish that his life should be ended by euthanasia. Giovanni Bertola, a retired professor of mathematical logic, lives a lonely existence, disillusioned with his subject, regretting the asceticism of the academic life he has led, and painfully aware of the onset of senility. He has decided to end his life partly out of despair but also as a result of his reflections on that despair; he is determined that his death should be a matter of rational choice, prompted by an understanding of the unhappiness of his life, and not dictated by pure chance. It is to be a gesture of defiance towards a society that tries to pretend that death and old age do not exist.

The professor's former star pupil, Carlo Meroni, now himself a lecturer in the same subject, has reluctantly agreed to carry out his wishes. Meroni, however, is a passive individual, cannot bring himself to fulfil his promise, and keeps putting off the day. Besides the two logicians there are four other principal characters, who again fall into pairs. The elderly spinster twins with whom Bertola lodges are twittering, semi-comic figures perpetually occupied with embroidery or opera on television. The third pair, Ginevra and Nino, have in common a particular kind of temperament, being decidedly unintellectual, but passionate and capable of decisive action. Ginevra is the sisters' niece, a young bank clerk who needs temporary lodgings and moves into their spare room; her mercurial, impulsive character has a crucial impact on the course of events. Nino, a pizzeria-owner with shady, underworld connections who befriends Meroni, is one of the *gigantesque* types of peasant strength that constantly recur in Arpino's fiction.

The setting, as usual in Arpino's urban novels, is Turin – or at least it is recognizable as such to those who know the city, for neither Turin nor its features are named. Similarly, time is never defined, and there is a general sense of abstraction; of the immobility of the old man's world; the season, appropriately, is autumn. Almost all the scenes take place indoors – the professor's sparsely furnished bedroom, the sisters' sitting-room with its *buco* *case di pessimo gusto*, Meroni's bachelor flat, or in confined spaces. The town is mostly viewed through windows, the effect being a feeling of imprisonment and alienation, never

English roses

Frederic Raphael

BERNARD SICHÈRE
La Gloire du maître
262pp. Paris: Denoël. 88fr.

What adultery was to the nineteenth-century novel, espionage is to today's. The sincerity of defection is common to both. Immorality has the allure of freedom, supposedly, in a bourgeois society whose limits can be transgressed only by those who share a secret language. Homosexuality and treason talk, or talked, on a party line, as it were. If the British had not made homosexuality a crime, would Burgess and Blunt have been no less tempted to the consummate duplicities of which they have become emblematic? Bernard Sichère has changed the names of his leading characters, perhaps in order to free himself from the obligations of accuracy, perhaps to liberate his imagination, but he has stuck closely to the chronology and to the style of the notorious pair. Philby, under the name of Irving Young (son of a famous Arabist), has a prominent, but secondary, part in the plot, while Maclean, under the improbable pseudonym of Clade, is somewhat marginal. No *serrurier* is needed to open this *roman à clef*.

La Gloire du maître is narrated by Jonathan Blake, a ringier for Blunt, even to the point of becoming Surveyor of the Queen's pictures. Jonathan is more interested in La Tour than in Poussin, but Sichère finds pertinent icons for arrogant ambivalence in works like "The Dice Players" and "St Sebastian". Is there a deliberate reference, in Jonathan's surname, to a spy who was almost certainly more professional and more destructive than Blunt? Sichère is a cunning and sophisticated writer who inhabits English life with some competence, though there are a few visible errors. He makes "Edward of Kent" the heir to the throne whose liaison with an American divorcee causes a constitutional crisis, and he awards Blake/Blunt the VC, of which – instead of the KCV – he is docked when the scandal breaks.

Blunt's fastidious shamelessness is well conveyed by a narrative which depends for entertainment – as Burgess's actual crime seems to have done – on the camp excesses of its fugitive centre. Sichère has a vivid, if gross, sexual imagination: there are nude bathing scenes and parades of pretty young men of varying degrees of deliciousness. It appears a great deal

easier to pick up rough or smooth trade than the history of gents' lavatories, and their gable cruisers, would suggest. Every evening, Sichère conveys nothing of the pettiness or puerility of English sexual attitudes. Jonathan takes on something of the magisterial authority of André Gide, that master-pastorizer of the

The character of young Philby, with his dandy women and his drinking problem, is the least satisfactory in the novel. By describing him as "couver de femmes", Sichère draws a clear analogy with Drieu la Rochelle, the quintessential French intellectual traitor of the period. The analogy is false, and fails to capture the perception of Philby. It is not simply that Drieu was a Fascist and an exhibitionist. Philby, it seems to me, was addicted to duplicity, not display. Adultery and espionage afforded him twin pleasures. He could wear both sides and stay in the middle, at least until the very last moment. Philby's affectations of sincere allegiance to the Soviet Union were not the revelation of his true feelings but the acknowledgment that the game was over. Sichère's Irving simply cannot carry off the stylishness displayed by his homosexual comrades. A lack of imaginative balance deprives the novel of a rounded sophistication it might have possessed. For the rest, Sichère mixes with assurance through the various locations and *couches sociales* where his characters do their wicked or dutiful business. The relationships between Jonathan and his trust-lovers have an artful sameness (he repeatedly loves them to death), while Francis kindly illustrates the homosexual capacity to get to very close quarters with proletarians of all nations. Unlike his model, he manages to keep his hands elegant and well-manicured in the process. Daisies too, it seems, can be gilded.

Victor Rothschild and Flora Solomon (sic) add plausibly topical notes to the story, which ends in a suicidal *retour aux sources* when Jonathan decamps to Rome for a final fling at the time of the Pope's near-assassination. He finds his quietest near the spot where Pier Paolo Pasolini encountered the vernal boys whose charms are made so freely accessible to living. The novel as a whole is a little short on the sordid realities, though there is a good imaginative leap when it comes to conveying why Irving, for all his Marxism, cannot bring himself to take the Moscow road. "Rouges étaient les roses de Margate" during his childhood; he remains an English rose, for all his redness.

Escapades

Robin Buss

CHRISTIAN GIUDICELLI
Station balnéaire
192pp. Paris: Gallimard. 72fr.
2 07 070786
JEAN-DENIS BREDIN
L'Absence
160pp. Paris: Gallimard. 75fr.
2 07 070755

Station balnéaire, which won the 1986 Prix Renaudot, is a tragic story about the commonplace escapade of two very ordinary lovers, José and Marie work at the same small hotel. He is Portuguese, occasionally a male prostitute; she is the victim of a child-abusing father. They have in common their suffering and their vulnerability, which José disguises behind a facade of bravado and Marie sublimates in romantic dreams. These defences are complementary, and take them from Paris to Languedoc where, briefly, José can act the part of the self-assured hotel customer instead of the humble hotel porter, and Marie can pretend that she is experiencing the kind of love affair she has always longed for. The result is inevitable, but unexpected, because Christian Giudicelli has managed to convince us that this couple, whom he began by establishing as pathetically ordinary and self-deluding, can, almost in spite of themselves, achieve sublimity on their own terms.

In fact, the delusion is more complex than that. One of José's lovers is a writer who, having confided the story of his relationship

with Marie. When José disappears, Jacques naturally begins to elaborate the events to make a novel, *Les Petites Amies*. "C'est mon cadeau d'adieu, José: t'ajder sans que tu le saches. Que je me consacre à deviner les progrès de ta passion, ce vers quoi elle t'entraîne, et cette passion a une chance supplémentaire de réussir." The novel that Jacques, finally bored with José and having decided to end their affair, is writing is the novel we read. The characters, Marie's drunken father, the woman who owns the hotel and lures after José, belong to Jacques' fiction as well and, for all of them, there can only be one outcome to these events.

The central character in Jean-Denis Bredin's *L'Absence* is also presented in conventional terms, then shown acting out of character under the pressure of events, with a narrator who is simultaneously in the novel and omnisciently outside it. Claude is a middle-aged creature of habit, characterized, like any secondary figure in fiction, by his predictability. When, instead of meeting his mistress in Venice, as he does every year at the same time, he leaves with his dying mother, the first-person narrator expresses surprise, then vanishes, leaving the novelist to tell us what happens during the ten days that Claude spends tending his mother in her last illness. When she departs this life, so does he, expiring perhaps with his progenitor or realizing a non-existence that has been there since the beginning. Both novels are very different ways, achieve a fine balance between the two levels on which they operate: fictional narratives and as narratives about fiction.

More than a one-novel man

Robert Gibson

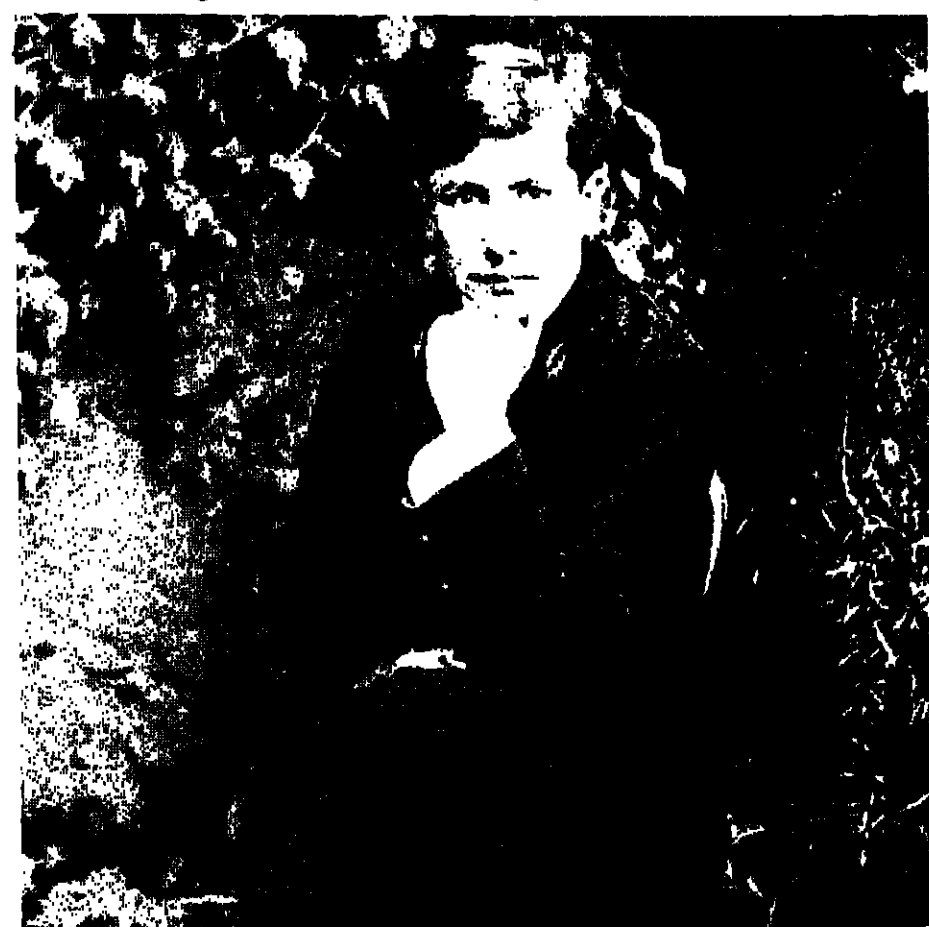
1986 marked the centenary of Alain-Fournier's birth, and the tributes paid to him in the course of the year were many, rich and sometimes strange. Plaques were affixed, with full civic pomp, to houses in which he had stayed at La Chapelle-d'Angillon and Nançay. In the spring, coach-loads of pilgrims and packs of local cyclists processed through the countryside where Meaulnes wandered in solitary ecstasy. In high summer, fancy-dress parties modelled on *la fête étrange* were staged in four different villages, while at Nançay there was a procession of ancient coaches and carriages. Throughout the summer, two actors, Danièle Bouvier and Jacky Vialon, toured the Cher – as did Frantz and Ganache – with an excellent adaptation of *Le Grand Meaulnes*. There were exhibitions galore: at La Chapelle, all the postcards Alain-Fournier ever sent were on display; at Épineuil, the village school was made to look as it was in the 1890s; Albi mounted a display of the paintings he loved best, while at Bourges, then later in Paris, there was an outstanding presentation of documents and photographs evoking Alain-Fournier's life, work and friends. In the autumn, there was a three-day international colloquium on *Le Grand Meaulnes* at the University of Tours and a one-day school at the University of Kent. On October 3, the Ministry of Postal and Telegraphic Services issued a centenary stamp depicting Meaulnes's brief encounter with Yvonne de Galais in front of her crumbling chateau. At the Francis Kyle Gallery in London and the Musée Imaginaire du Grand Meaulnes in Nançay, there were displays of paintings and drawings evoking *Le Grand Meaulnes* and the landscapes which inspired it. In all of this multifarious activity, symbiosis between art and life could scarcely have been more intimate.

Of the books of photographs which appeared during the year, the most outstanding was *Le Grand Meaulnes: Images et documents*. This is an impressive compilation of snapshots from the Fournier family album together with contemporary photographs and monochrome reproductions of paintings that evoke either the author's times or the atmosphere of *Le Grand Meaulnes*. No less attractively illustrated are the two books published by Carcanet: David Arkell's *Alain-Fournier: A brief life* has seventy-five illustrations, including a clutch taken at Épineuil by Alain-Fournier himself while in his early teens; while W. J. Strachan's *Towards the Lost Domain: Letters from Alain-Fournier* is a translation of all the correspondence Alain-Fournier sent back from England in the summer of 1905, owes much of its considerable period charm to the admirably reproduced postcards depicting Edwardian London.

The centenary was a good year for admirers of Alain-Fournier's letters. Some isolated letters of great importance were made public for the first time; a newly discovered letter to Gide, expressing remorse for lost innocence, was revealed at the Tours Colloquium, and two more major letters were published in Number 39 of the *Bulletin des amis de Jacques Rivière et Alain-Fournier*: one, sent to T. S. Eliot, contains Alain-Fournier's views on his latest discoveries in English literature; the other, to Yvonne de Brochet, establishes not only that he sent her episodes of *Le Grand Meaulnes* while it was being serialized in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* but also that she sent back detailed comments. The letters to his family and those to his friend from school days, René Bichet (*le petit B.*), were reissued, both collections significantly enlarged. The original edition of the *Lettres au petit B.* consisted simply

of fifteen letters from Alain-Fournier to Bichet; the new edition includes twenty-nine of his letters plus forty-five of Bichet's, together with five of his prose poems and a short play; in addition, there are informative essays on Bichet by Jacques and by Isabelle Rivière. The *Lettres à sa famille* have also been augmented: various names designated in earlier editions only by initials are now printed in full, passages excised by Isabelle Rivière have been restored and all her surviving letters to her brother are

attack him vehemently over it but when a rich patron rescues him from penury by inviting him to join his colony of painters, their celebrations are lyrical. Their affection for one another and their alert responses to life are made more poignant by our knowing how soon it all ended. Bichet died in 1912, at the age of twenty-six, from a casual overdose of morphine; Rivière was captured in August 1914 and never fully recovered from his experiences as a prisoner-of-war; Alain-Fournier was killed



Alain-Fournier at La Chapelle, September 18, 1905. The photograph is taken from David Arkell's *Alain-Fournier: A brief life*, reviewed on this page.

now included. The editing of both these collections has been done by Alain Rivière, whose exemplary devotion to his parents and his uncle is matched by his scholarly integrity. Together with J.-G. Morgenthau and François Garcia, he has also edited *La Peinture, le cœur et l'esprit*, the three-way correspondence between Alain-Fournier, Jacques Rivière and their mutual friend, the painter André Lhote, who was a particularly spirited pioneer of Cubism in the years before the First World War and the *NRP*'s foremost art critic for two decades after it.

The four volumes, which together extend to over 1,200 pages, constitute an admirable memorial to the correspondents concerned and to the lost art of letter-writing. They record their lively responses to the literature, paintings and music appearing on the Paris scene at one of the most productive periods in its history; they are as ready to respond sympathetically to each other's personal problems as they are to write about their own; they report regularly, and often in illuminating detail, on their work in progress, and each of them has a relish for the freshly minted image and for the cadence of a phrase or sentence. To Bichet, by far the most academically brilliant of the group, Alain-Fournier sometimes adopts a patronizing tone which even now causes the reader to cringe, but it is also to Bichet that he confides the fullest account we have of his brief encounter in 1905. André Lhote remains the religious sceptic of the group, often expressing this with earthy trenchancy; on separate occasions, Jacques Rivière and Alain-Fournier

in action less than a month later. The very last letter ever sent to him, characteristically warm and eloquent, was from his sister Isabelle, an admirable correspondent in her own right: when she wrote, invoking God's protection, he was already dead.

Rewarding though these letters are, they are eclipsed in importance by the long-awaited critical edition of *Miracles* and *Le Grand Meaulnes*, originally planned as a Pléiade volume but now published by Garnier. It includes all Alain-Fournier's poems, four of which have never before been published, four new prose pieces and over 200 pages of drafts, various passages excised from early versions of Meaulnes's affair with Valentine. In their original form these transcribed, more or less directly, the real-life liaison between Alain-Fournier and Jeanne Bruneau, including their stay at the Orgeville artists' colony as guests of André Lhote: they do much to account for the atmosphere of guilt and that compulsive need for expiation which floods darkly over Part Three of the novel. (Had Alain-Fournier been true to those first inclinations, the power and credibility of *Le Grand Meaulnes* would have been immeasurably enhanced.) If the editors are to be criticized at all, it is for not accepting the admittedly fearsome challenge of dating the rough drafts and evolving plans, important clues to which are provided in some of the newly published letters, but for the treasure-trove they have provided they have placed all Alain-Fournier scholars in their debt. Of particular interest are his evolving plans for the lost domain: in its early form, it was a ruined chapel where Seurel hoped to meet the ghost of his dead mother; only gradually, and relatively late, did he seize on the notion of a children's party and make it an anthology of his own most treasured memories.

Not to have access to this store of material was clearly a major disadvantage for anyone seeking to chart the genesis of *Le Grand Meaulnes* and this is especially true of Robert Dutmer in *Alain-Fournier ou le fantasme amoureux*. His painstaking account of how the novel came to be written traverses familiar ground and became outmoded almost as soon as it appeared. What remains is decidedly uneven in quality. It provides a useful, well-

stocked gazetteer of Alain-Fournier's comments on the many writers who affected him but prefaces this with a detailed account of his life written as autobiography. It is done with some flair, but one wonders whether it was worth doing at all.

David Arkell's succinct biography is generously illustrated and crisply written. He provides a useful *tour d'horizon* of Alain-Fournier's life and times, and a particularly informative chapter on the Parisian scene in 1910-11. At the same time, the briskness of his manner precludes the analysis of nuances and complexities. The treatment of Yvonne de Quievrecourt and her dismissal from the action is far too perfunctory: the evidence of Alain-Fournier's letters clearly reveals that he went on yearning for her long after he is said to have put youthful calf-love behind him and found fulfilment in adultery. Arkell's claim that a works' garden-party Alain-Fournier attended in Chiswick in July 1905 was the source of *la fête étrange* over-simplifies a more complex process which began much earlier. In the excitement of "discovery" Arkell is so eager to look forward that he omits to observe that the immediate effect of that incident was to prompt Alain-Fournier to look back. Describing the garden-party to his parents, he reported that it reminded him of the party-games organized by his mother in his Épineuil childhood. There – and the drafts in the Garnier edition amply confirm it – lies the *fons et origo* both of the lost domain and of all his value-judgments in literature and life.

His correspondence from London, where, to improve his English, he worked for the Sander-Son wallpaper firm in the summer of 1905, is full of sharply observed details of the Edwardian scene, memories of his own receding past, impressions of visits to the Tate or the National Gallery and the outlines of his own literary plans. Strachan provides a helpful list of notes, identifying all the contemporary allusions. His scholarship is sound, though he is in error in stating that Alain-Fournier's despairing 1912 love-letter to Yvonne de Brochet has never before been published: it was printed in full in the 1968 Harrap edition of *Le Grand Meaulnes*. His translations of the London letters, like Arkell's, leave much to be desired. Strachan strives for literal accuracy and is often laden; Arkell is racier and occasionally far too free. Sometimes one scores a hit where the other significantly misses. Embarking on a description of the region where he used to spend his late summer holidays, Alain-Fournier re-

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fers to it as *un pays perdu dans la Sologne*: Strachan renders this as "a remote region deep in the Sologne". Arkell less happily as "a country lost in the Sologne". In the course of the Sanderson party, Alain-Fournier reports that to help him escape from an importunate ice-cream seller, "Par plaisanterie Mr. Nightingale avait dit du ton que j'aurais pu prendre pour me débarrasser poliment 'Quelle part à aller, je crois, ce soir, mademoiselle.'" Strachan's version runs "For a joke, Mr N, in a tone which I could have supposed was to spare me any embarrassment, had said: 'You've somewhere to go this evening, I think, young lady?'" Arkell proposes: "While Mr N., pretending to be me, announced more politely 'Afraid I have to be elsewhere, Miss,'" Arkell is much closer here, though both translators miss the point that Mr N, imitating Alain-Fournier, speaks in somewhat fractured French. On another occasion, Strachan is even wider of the mark: expressing his difficulty in finding words to match his feelings, Alain-Fournier says "j'ai envie de me

moindre les mains" ("I feel like gnawing my hands"); Strachan translates, "I feel a desire to bite off my hands." This would be like resorting to the guillotine as a cure for dandruff. For all this activity, comparatively little attention has been devoted to *Le Grand Meaulnes* itself. An essay by John Fowles accompanies the reissue of Frank Davison's translation; it is as admirable in its way as the essay by Bonamy Dobrée which prefaced the Delisle translation, but its principal interest will be for admirers of *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In the perceptive introduction he provides to the new Garnier edition, Daniel Leuwers departs from the traditional view of Meaulnes as the only character of interest. Seeking to revalue *Le Grand Meaulnes* for readers of the 1980s, he suggests – as does Arkell – that in 1910, Alain-Fournier was as profoundly affected by Dostoevsky as, in 1905, he had been by Debussy. (His enthusiasm for Dostoevsky might be dated a year earlier, when he declared he had much in com-

mon with Prince Myshkin.) He fell in love with Yvonne de Quiévrecent because she seemed the embodiment of Méliandine. He dealt with Jeanne Bruneau as harshly as he did because, after reading *Notes from Underground*, he identified with Ordinov who felt justified in mistreating all women because the only one he truly loved was forever denied him. Leuwers argues that Meaulnes is similarly motivated and sees him as something of an ogre, devastating the lives of all the women unfortunate enough to become involved with him. Frantz de Galais is seen as equally perverse, so fearful of having to grow up that he deliberately convives at Meaulnes's discomfiture, plotting for him to meet Valentine in Paris so as to wreck his hopes of happiness with Yvonne. For Leuwers, the novel is anything but a sugary elegy for lost innocence; it has to be read as a chronicle shot through with pain, guilt and bad faith. (A totally different reading is proposed in No 39 of the *Bulletin* by Li Dihua, author of the first Chinese translation of *Le Grand*

Meaulnes, for whom the novel's attraction is the sacrifices the characters are prepared to make for one another.) For good measure, and as a useful counter, Leuwers's provocative piece is accompanied by the long preface provided by Jacques Rivière for the 1924 edition of *Meaulnes*: it remains the most perceptive study of Alain-Fournier ever written. At the end of 1986, some important writings by Alain-Fournier still remained unpublished. These include the fragments of his unfinished second novel *Colombe Blanchet*, his collected literary journalism, edited by André Cayrol, which runs to several hundred pages, and a new, expanded edition of the correspondence with Jacques Rivière, annotated by Pierre Gauthier. Once all this material appears, Alain-Fournier himself will require reassessing. One can confidently predict that he will come to be known not only as the author of a solitary, haunting novel, but as a prolific and perceptive commentator on the rich and tragic times in which he lived and died.

In different voices

Stephen Romer

PETER DALE
Narrow Strals
143pp. Hippopotamus Press. £10.50
(paperback, £6.95).
0904179346
JULES LAFORGUE
Poems
Translated by Peter Dale
456pp. Anvil. £18.
0856461458
CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
The Complete Verse, Volume One
Translated by Francis Scarfe
396pp. Anvil. £12.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0856461512

There is a saying: "Translation is resurrection, but not of the body". In the context of poetry, a simulacrum of the original body may arise, decked out with rhymes in the right places and an appropriate metre, but it may have a starved look or (owing, say, to the exigency of having to find a rhyme) a portly, even obese appearance. And for all its wisdom, this motto forgets the element of challenge, of *défi*, which alone spurs the translator on to become a virtuoso of resurrection. Very occasionally – and usually it takes a great poet to do it – a perfect translation is achieved. If Baudelaire, for example, genuinely lives again through the versions of Robert Lowell, it is, paradoxically, not because Lowell effaces himself behind a "literal" translation, but because Lowell's own voice is clearly recognizable speaking through Baudelaire.

Peter Dale is not, it is only fair to say, a poet of Lowell's stature. He is a translator of long standing: to his Villon, we can now add a further selection of versions from Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Corbière, Rimbaud and Valéry, and a complete edition of Laforgue's poems. In *Narrow Strals* (presumably echoing the title of his earlier anthology of translation, *Cross Channel*) he seems to favour a method which respects the formal perfection of the original and yet produces an English poem that does not read like translation. He suffers, needless to say, losses on both counts, but a major consolation for this (and one of the persistently valuable aspects of all translation) is the fresh insights we gain thereby into the nature of the originals. We are led to enquire why, for example, his versions of Corbière and Rimbaud are superior to his versions of Baudelaire and Mallarmé; and we discover that, to borrow a musical analogy, while the latter poets write a seamless legato, impossible to imitate in English translation, Corbière writes a staccato music, far closer to the variegated, heavily accented consonantal texture of English.

Take the opening of Baudelaire's "Le Balcon":

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
O toi, tous mes plaisirs ô toi, tous mes devoirs!
becomes, on the facing page:

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,
All of my pleasures you laid all of my duty, you!
"Mistress of mistresses" is inevitably absurdly

brisk compared to the sibilant, lingering French, while the inverted position of the pronoun in the second line is both awkward and un-English. The sensual feminine gender endings of French (think of the repeated use Baudelaire makes of such words as *heureuse*, *langoureuse*, *majestueuse*) have a phonetic value that is simply unavailable in English. Dale's version of "Le Balcon" suffers also from the necessities of meeting the rhyme scheme, and this leads in turn to his making unwarranted additions. Where Baudelaire makes a statement:

Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées
Que l'espace est profond que le cœur est puissant!

we find in English:

How lovely on warm evenings the sunset [gleam]
How deep lies space, how powerful the heart [must be]!

I have bracketed the words that Dale has seen fit to add to the work of Baudelaire for they are not what the French poet wrote or meant. The modal "must be" is especially damaging since it lends a quasi-subjunctive mood to what in the original is pure affirmation. Not surprisingly, Mallarmé fares even worse.

Corbière and Rimbaud are a different matter, however. If Corbière's poetry is staccato, it is also extremely colloquial, and both these elements make it eminently translatable. Dale's version of "Le Poète contumace" is very impressive. He rhymes as neatly as the original, and in the same places. The tonal quality of Corbière is retained throughout the whole of this long poem. The additions that Dale occasionally makes to Corbière are not damaging either.

Et dans sa pauvre tête
Déménagé, encor il sentait que les vers
Hexamètres faisaient les cent pas de travers.
— Manque de savoir-vivre extrême — il survivait —
Et — manque de savoir-mourir — il écrivait.

for example becomes:

Didn't this poor head ache
Unhinged by all the hexameters he still feels
Parading up and down his mind with clicking heels?
Quite lacking life's know-how he lingered, then
Lacking the die-how he took up the pen.

The "clicking heels", Dale's addition, is perfectly in keeping with Corbière's meaning here, and the playful elaboration of the stock phrase *savoir-vivre* is well matched in the English.

The delightful early poems of Rimbaud – "Les Corbeaux", "Roman", "Rêve pour l'hiver", "Première soirée" and "La Maline" – are likewise well served by Dale's versions. Again, it is the light, colloquial tone of the French, and in particular its qualities of concrete description, that can be grasped by the English language and the English temper (though the obscure, more urbane colloquialism of Laforgue, as we shall see, is a different matter). Paul Valéry is also heavily represented in this selection, but with only mixed results. Valéry is one of the most richly orchestrated of all French poets, classically in diction, seamless in music, and these qualities present Dale with problems. There are nevertheless many things to commend in his versions of "Le Cimetiè-

marin" and "Narcisse", though in the former the French iambic looks strangely truncated in its English octosyllabic equivalent. "Le Serpent" is marred by some straight mistranslation in the first stanza; the serpent's venom is superior, and not inferior, to hemlock.

Improbable but true: this same indefatigable translator has also undertaken to render all Laforgue's poetry into rhymed and metrical English verse. Laforgue, who died at twenty-seven, was prolific, and the book stretches to over 450 pages (each poem has its facing translation), from *Les Complaintes* through to *Derniers Vers*. Unfortunately, as it stands, the venture seems to me monumentally misconceived. With Laforgue, Dale has simply pushed his luck too far, and in this volume he suffers from that kind of snow-blindness common to over-prolific or systematic translators in which grotesque inversions, muddled syntax, meaningless compound phrases and mixed slang are all hustled willy-nilly into English; the excuse given by Dale resides in what he calls the "quiddity" of Laforgue, his unique difficulty. But whatever else he was, Laforgue was not clumsy; clumsiness was no part of his "quiddity", and yet that is what we find in the English.

Dale's brief "Note on the Translation" carries a warning signal. He apologizes that the terseness of Laforgue's colloquialism in his short lines and refrains "has necessitated some expansion at certain points"; he also apologizes for his poet's "bewildering change of speaker and mood" and explains, as well he might, that he has clarified and simplified the punctuation "to make the reader's daunting task a little easier". Predictably, the influence of Laforgue on Pound and Eliot is treated in the introduction. Dale is indignant that Pound, who called Laforgue the "finest wrought" among the French satirists of his time, should have translated only fragments of a poem by Laforgue – without apparently considering the possibility that Pound left out the rest because he felt he was unable to translate it into decent English.

Needless to say there are some successes here, and on occasion Dale is as deft as he is when translating Corbière. Too often, however, the success is spoiled by a contorted rhyme or word order that will make even the most patient reader groan; it won't do simply to applaud "for effort". It is hard enough to read Laforgue at any length, at any one sitting – his incessant, jokiness quickly becomes burdensome; any translation, therefore, must be as light on its feet as the original or, one is perhaps justified in saying, not at all. This is the beginning of the second stanza of "Complainte d'un certain dimanche":

Dans ce village en falaises, jolies, vers les cloches,
Je redécouvrais dévotement par les enfants.
Qui s'en vont, fute bêtise de rêves broches;
Et rentrent, moi, sacré-cœur se fend!

The French follows a perfectly ordered syntax. Dale's version reads:

Toward the cliff-bound village, far, its bells, I head,
Turning back down, outstared by every kid in it,
Those who go, misty, a blushing, in their broken bread,
And home, my sacred heart, you wait!

This is so stilted as to be hardly recognizable in English. In the "Complainte de cette bonne lune", Dale falls foul of the colloquial French. The stars incant in Laforgue's French: "Dus l'giron / Du patron / On y danse, on y danse"; Dale's cockney stars echo: "On his lap / On nor chap, / There we dance, there we dance". Somehow, and inexplicably, the cockney changes to modern American slang in "Well, clownish queen of the village show, / Split Lady of the drunken crew". Inevitably, Dale fares worst of all in the very short refrains, even in the French, these can often lay claim to no more than a tangential brush with meaning; in the English they become nonsense altogether. "Préaux des soirs, / Christs des dorois!" becomes "The evening quads, / Dorn Christs-Gods". There is straight mistranslation as in "Et tes pudeurs ne sont que des passes stiles", which Dale renders "Your pruniness is just a play on the reflex", thereby writing the opposite of what Laforgue meant, since "pudeurs" means "modesty".

At the Good Knight-Errant: wine
And then dine.
Residential hotel, library, prices cut fine.

The last phrase bears a resemblance to a current English phrase like "cut-price", but it is not in fact English. This happens time and again. If Dale, or his editor, had decided upon a rigorously scrutinized selection, then it might have been given a valuable book; as it stands, its value escapes me.

Anvil has given us a valuable book, however, in the handsomely produced *Complete Verse of Baudelaire*, scrupulously translated into prose, annotated and introduced by the late Francis Scarfe. As Scarfe explains in his substantial introduction, the book is a "complete rehandling" of his classic Penguin Baudelaire, which was published in 1961. We have now a complete, scholarly edition, in which considerable care has been lavished on editing and placing the poems correctly. For all his talk of "modest" prose translations, Scarfe's versions should remain the classic point of reference because they are comprehensive, reliable, and almost always rhythmically pleasing. They may not have the brio of the best verse translations, but at least we are spared the sickening lurches. Scarfe's prose rendering of "Le Balcon" reads: "How lovely are the suns of sultry evenings; how space grows deep; how the heart compassed! As I leaned towards you, my beloved queen, I seemed to breathe the bouquet of your blood." One could scarcely ask more of a translation, verse or prose.

Just occasionally the prose sounds slightly unpolished, a trifle fussy; but these moments are few and far between. Scarfe's introduction is a model of intelligent synthesis and concision. Biographical and critical in scope, it deftly steers its own course between the major reappraisals of Baudelaire, Scarfe deludes the poet against Sartre's depiction of the prototype Existentialist "deliberate failure" as capable of fends off those, including Eliot, who tried to appropriate him for religion. The volume as a whole is a fitting monument to a distinguished scholar and francophile.

A simple man in a complex time

David Fraser

DAVID EISENHOWER
Eisenhower at War 1943-1945
1,008pp. Collins. £20.
0002177692

Dwight Eisenhower gained and retained the respect and loyalty of a huge Anglo-American Army in the Second World War, steered it through a good many inter-Allied quarrels between 1943 and 1945, convinced millions of men that he was indifferent to national prejudice and cared only for the attainment of victory (earning periodic American criticism along the way for "selling out" to the British); and presided over that victory. Afterwards he continued to serve, reaching the highest pinnacles of human authority. At all times he conveyed the impression of a generous-hearted, selfless man, adept at getting an often difficult team of subordinate commanders to tolerate each other sufficiently for the campaign against the enemy to go forward. Others might become fierce and opinionated on strategic issues: Ike was the finder of a median way, the conciliator, the military diplomat *par excellence*.

David Eisenhower planned a book on his grandfather's second term as President and soon discovered that his researches drew him increasingly to earlier times, and that like the President was only comprehensible in terms of the experiences of Ike the Supreme Commander. The result was this very long book, the first of a planned trilogy, covering the wartime period when, as the author says of Dwight Eisenhower, "Decisions were made and implemented by him and others which continue to shape the world." Of course at the Eisenhower level of command there were few purely military decisions – the necessity to keep Allied tempers sweet saw to that if nothing else did. Of course, too, he was a "political general" in the sense that he needed to be alive to the effects of the campaign on public opinion, particularly on American public opinion. Less evident is the author's proposition that Eisenhower showed much insight in the world-political sphere: the author has run the risk of obscuring Eisenhower's very real achievement as the pursuer of military harmony, by pegging out claims which are harder to sustain.

The real interest of the book is in its discussions of Eisenhower the strategist and Eisenhower the embryonic statesman. His judgment has often been castigated, by the British, as an attempt to please too many people at once, an evasion of difficult or unpalatable choices; and there is surely more in this than David Eisenhower allows. Too often Ike (who seemed to have had wholly inadequate personal contact with his principal British subordinate, Montgomery) commanded permissively, using diplomatic language to convey acceptable things to different men, each of whom saw the issues at stake in wholly different ways. Too often, at moments of real crisis such as the initial Ardennes battle, he seemed hardly to command at all. Yet his judgments were often defensible: his fault lay in failing to impose them.

At the time, British opinion (mainly that of Brooke and Montgomery) was impatient with Eisenhower's strategic sense or, as they saw matters, his lack of it. Three instances of Anglo-American disagreement, to a greater or lesser extent centring on Eisenhower, are particularly interesting. First, Anvil – later named Dragon – the withdrawal of forces from the Italian campaign in order to land them in the south of France, as support to Eisenhower's Normandy campaign; second, the aftermath of Normandy, the controversy about how concentrated should be the Allied advance in exploitation of the Normandy victories; and third, the closing weeks of the war, after the Rhine crossing, when Eisenhower, having regarded Montgomery's Army Group to what the latter regarded as a secondary axis towards the Baltic, directed the Allied (American) Armies on Erfurt and Leipzig – on areas the Russians cared little about: directed them thus in accordance with an agreement he had personally negotiated with Stalin, while specifically ignoring (as did the American government and

Chiefs of Staff) Churchill's pleas that it would be good if the Western Allies reached Berlin and Prague before the Red Army. Good, that is, in political terms – good for the future. In each of these instances – and many others – David Eisenhower defends his grandfather's military judgment and – less persuasively and perhaps unnecessarily – his political perspicacity as well.

In the first instance – Anvil – Eisenhower reckoned that he could do with more forces than he already had, as well as another port of entry – Marseille – to France. Anvil had been strongly attacked by the British, who believed that it would place the forces landing near Marseille at unnecessary risk, as well as drawing off amphibious resources from the pro-



General Eisenhower lunching on Cration, somewhere in Tunisia in 1943.

jected Allied invasion of North-West Europe – Overlord. It had been postponed. But the postponed Anvil was equally strongly attacked, by Churchill and by Brooke in particular. Opponents of the plan regarded it as irrelevant to Eisenhower's Normandy operations, both too late and too remote. More specifically, Churchill and Brooke reckoned that the Germans were presenting Alexander with the chance to win a crushing victory – Ultra, the decoding of German signals, had just (June 1944) disclosed Hitler's orders to stand south of the Apennines – provided forces were not withdrawn from Italy. Eisenhower knew that the American Joint Chiefs of Staff were set on Anvil. In this, if not in all matters, he felt himself to be Marshall's agent. He had acquiesced in postponement: he would not accept cancellation. Victory in Italy was speculative and the Allies had agreed on North-West Europe as the prime theatre of war. He firmly resisted attempts to enlist him in the anti-Anvil camp.

In the event Anvil had no operational effect whatsoever. And nobody can say with certainty what would have happened had more troops been left in Italy, and if a smaller American Army had contested North-West Europe that the military verdict must remain open. But political clouds have since drifted across this essentially military though complex question, and here David Eisenhower makes two mistakes. The first is to exaggerate the significance, in the minds of the British at the time, of a possible advance to the Danube valley and Vienna in exploitation of a triumphant North Italian campaign. This has acquired much retrospective merit (and support) because of the clear political advantages that would have been gained had the Allies been able to pre-empt the Soviet forces' intrusion into the area. The idea formed the basis of one of Alexander's options for future action. It has been defended as both politically and militarily enlightened by, among others, Churchill and Macmillan, and it is unsurprising that David Eisenhower reckons it to have been the prime cause of British opposition to Anvil. But it was not so. Formal British opposition to Anvil, whether by Churchill or the British Chiefs of Staff, was militarily based, in the belief that an immediate victory in Italy was being sacrificed to a long-term

reinforcement of North-West Europe which would provide no early benefits. The idea of subsequently advancing to Vienna was characterized by Brooke as "dreams . . . wild hopes". He remarked that such ideas had received no proper military study and that the passage of the defended Alps, which would probably take place in winter, was out of the question. Brooke knew, too, that the Americans would never countenance such a switch of strategic priorities and he deplored Churchill's floating of what, to him, was an irrelevant idea. David Eisenhower recognizes this but underestimates its importance. To the extent that he regards American determination for Anvil as a triumph over British Danubian ambition he is off target: albeit understandably so.

Market Garden operation towards Arnhem, but he regarded its potential as limited. David Eisenhower suggests that Ike supported Market Garden because he thought that its outcome would at least convince Montgomery that the Germans had plenty of fight left; he thought it would also persuade the British general to relinquish the argument that only a concentrated punch (his) would be necessary in order to end the war. This is a somewhat convoluted and unconvincing thesis. And even after the end of Market Garden, Montgomery, throughout the autumn months, attacked Eisenhower's so-called "broad front" strategy as poor generalship, the frittering away of resources to no coherent object: so prolonging the conflict.

In one sense Eisenhower – both Eisenhowers – win this round on points. Some of the operations conducted by the Allies in the last three months of 1944 may have been diffused and laborious, but there was never – or never after the first week of September – any chance of a decisive result in the west before winter. The logistic situation, with the port of Antwerp denied to the Allies, was too tenuous; at least until the end of October. Despite criticism of Eisenhower for failing to strengthen and support Montgomery's "northern thrust", the northward advance did not slow down because of a shortage of troops: it was port and road capacity that was in short supply. Eisenhower was right in his judgment that no ambitious advance into Germany could be undertaken until Antwerp was available, and this meant a campaign to clear German garrisons from the banks of the Scheldt. Montgomery's assertions to the contrary are totally unconvincing. As to the degree of opposition confronting the Allies on their eastward march there conceivably might have been a chance of success in all-out pursuit in the first week of September: Montgomery, though, was certainly not the man to lead this sort of reckless, risk-all adventure. But, however near defeat the Germans were, once they had succeeded in reconstructing some sort of a front the Allies were bound to be in for a period of consolidation before any final offensive. Eisenhower's strategy was, therefore, prudent and probably realistic. His error was in failing to impose it and in going through the motions of supporting, indeed ordering, Market Garden even though he was sure that it could have no major strategic consequence: he gave the impression (which his biographer does not wholly dispel) that he was undecided which route to the heart of Germany he preferred. This method of commanding by ambiguous negotiation does not imply military greatness, and it is unsurprising that Eisenhower was charged with seeking to attack on too many fronts with insufficient strength. In fact, until the logistic situation was better balanced no major attack on any front could achieve significant strategic results. Eisenhower knew



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this perfectly well, but he spoke and acted in a more optimistic – and thus misleading – sense. Even David Eisenhower, whose sympathies so clearly lie with his grandfather, makes Montgomery's tactless and ill-mannered exasperation only too easy to understand.

Here, too, David Eisenhower seeks to give a political dimension to the debate which is unnecessary and unconvincing. He suggests that Montgomery's persistent advocacy of a concentrated northern thrust was some sort of "high level political initiative", the object of which was to make the Supreme Commander appear timid if he disagreed, and thus responsible for prolonging the war. This is sadly to over-complicate. Montgomery thought Eisenhower's operational sense defective in this instance (unfairly so in this reviewer's opinion) and (a more soundly based criticism) his refusal to make command choices maddening. There was little more to it than that.

Fighting and in-fighting

Brian Bond

CHARLES CARRINGTON
Soldier at Bomber Command
240pp. Leo Cooper, £16.
085020819

When Charles Carrington rejoined the Army in September 1939 from the Cambridge University Press he was approaching the veteran stage, having volunteered in 1914 at the age of seventeen, survived the Somme and Passchendaele campaigns, and published one of the best of all the junior officers' memoirs, *A Subaltern's War*, in 1929. After witnessing the pathetic lack of air support for the rapidly disintegrating British Expeditionary Force in Normandy in June 1940, he was selected to represent the Army's interest in this neglected mode of warfare at Bomber Command headquarters. There, secluded in the Chiltern beechwoods near High Wycombe, and a mere lieutenant-colonel among senior airmen, he was often referred to simply as "Soldier". Carrington's junior rank and lack of status were partially offset by valuable connections in the press, politics and the Services, and as a fervent supporter of Army-Air Force co-operation he was not easily discouraged by the likes of Saundby, Harris and Oxlend. Indeed, as these commendably immodest memoirs reveal, he played an important part in educating both parties in this crucial aspect of combined operations.

Carrington's introduction to the intricacies of inter-Service relations involved the selection of beach targets to be bombed by the RAF in the event of a German invasion. Admiral Sir William James (sometime the child model for Millais's "Bubbles") gave him a foretaste of the battles to come: "My dear fellow, the Navy always deals with that. So [rather fiercely], you won't want to know about it, will you?" Though this contingency fortunately never arose, Carrington's investigations brought home to him the vital issue of the Safety Bomb Line, that is, the development of apparatus and procedures necessary to permit close-support bombing without endangering Allied lives.

The air-barons at Bomber Command were mostly likeable as individuals, but evinced scant sympathy for the Army's needs. The advent of four-engined bombers in 1941 was bad news for the Army in that the new types were clearly unsuitable for close-support work. In the short term the Army would have to make do with obsolete aircraft and what it could beg from the Americans. Carrington charts the Army's gradual rebuilding after Dunkirk and the RAF's successful delaying action throughout 1941 against giving priority in production to close-support aircraft. As with the second volume of Nigel Hamilton's *Montgomery* (1983), *Soldier at Bomber Command* provides a useful reminder of just how long and dispiriting was the interval between Dunkirk and the eventual launching of Overlord.

Even more significantly, Carrington offers a fascinating case-study of the role of individuals in the bureaucratic manoeuvres and in-fighting, which were at their most intense where inter-Service co-operation was re-

The third, and probably the most important, issue of controversy is Eisenhower's deliberate abstention from directing Allied forces on Berlin and Prague in the closing stages of the war. This, in effect, was his present to the Russians (whose behaviour was already predictably outrageous) of some of the key positions on the checkerboard of a devastated Europe. Militarily, Eisenhower's logic was defensible. His mission went no further than victory, and the line of operations he directed would ensure it – as by then would any other line, for the German Reich and Wehrmacht were crumbling into pieces. His concern was to see that military success was assured and that there were no misunderstandings with the advancing Red Army. He had no formal reason to act otherwise. He had no political directives as to what he was to achieve beyond the battlefield. It was for President and Prime Minister – much, much earlier – to inject a far-sighted political

dimension into the Supreme Commander's thinking, his conduct of war. They did not explicitly do so. It is highly unlikely that they could ever have agreed to do so. Eisenhower made clear – in writing – that he would adjust his military plans if political considerations (which he justly acknowledged constitute the objects of war) were paramount. He was never so directed. He was left to his own devices, as an avowedly simple military man. It was predictable that Churchill's reasonable but belated and unsupported exhortations to Ike to get to Prague and Berlin before the Russians were not accorded any serious or formal attention, while they caused little but impatience in Washington. How not? Eisenhower was completing the task he'd been given, and should do so without interference.

The failure was political, and Eisenhower is easy to defend as the straightforward military commander who got on with the job and who cannot be blamed for the absence of political directives which nobody gave him. Yet David Eisenhower stretches that defence further. He argues that his grandfather, with a vacuum of political authority in Washington, had to make the political decisions himself, and did so with his eyes open; guided, as on previous occasions but now more consciously, more directly, by his sense of the overriding importance of keeping in with the Soviet Union. If this was so, it leaves Ike, the Supreme Commander, somewhat vulnerable before history, and the vulnerability haunted his later, political years when the United States was taking a harsher view of Soviet conduct and pretensions. It seems more likely that at the time Ike saw it all pretty simply, pretty optimistically. Nothing in his temperament or training had prepared him for the responsibilities of that particular hour and it is surely unjust to cast blame on the executant where the fault lies with the vacuum of

enlightened policy above him. In 1940 Eisenhower, in a very different connection, wrote to a friend, "I believe in direct methods, possibly because I am too simple-minded to be an intriguer or to attempt to be clever... My only job is to carry out my directives as well as I can." That was the fundamentally naïve and decent Eisenhower. That is not inconsistent with his Presidential ambitions, already no doubt aroused – America wanted a good, honest, patriotic and disinterested man of no excessive complexity. To claim for him more vision than he possessed is to place at jeopardy his essential reputation.

Eisenhower at War is a patchy, uneven book. Part of the narrative – the often told tale of the Overlord planning, the thrill of the debate and decision whether or not to launch the enterprise with weather uncertain – is excellently done. On the other hand its author is confused over the principal issues at stake. There is incomprehension, particularly of British aims and personalities, excessive searching for one-sided evidence, and as for characterization, Portal is described as "austere and humourless", while Brooke's personality completely evades David Eisenhower. There is disproportion – too much gossip speculation from suspect sources, crowding out the genuine and serious drama of the Supreme Commander's position. And there is a lamentable profusion of available mistakes, many trifling but a few about even geography gets mishandled, and the British troops who crossed the Waal at Nijmegen under fire may be surprised to read that the American flag had already been hoisted at the north end of the bridge – but even more surprised to read that the river they had crossed was the Maas, which was in fact some twenty kilometres behind them and had been passed on the previous day.

Making the alliance work

David Reynolds

ALEX DANCHEV
Very Special Relationship: Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American alliance, 1941-44
201pp. Brassey's Defence Publishers, £19.95.
008031970

Sir John Dill was Chief of the Imperial General Staff from Dunkirk to Pearl Harbor. He therefore played the unenviable role of Britain's top soldier at a time of almost unmitigated national disasters. In December 1941, Churchill, fretting for military victories, replaced Dill with Sir Alan Brooke. "Dilly-Dally", as the impatient PM nicknamed him, was packed off to Washington. There he served until his sudden death in November 1944 as head of the Joint Staff Mission – Britain's military link with the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Dill arrived in Washington an exhausted failure. Churchill wanted to get rid of him, and the American top brass were unenthusiastic about his appointment. Yet less than three years later he was interred with full military honours in Arlington National Cemetery, just across the Potomac from Washington itself. Flags in the city flew at half-mast. The Joint Chiefs acted as pallbearers. General George C. Marshall, the US Army Chief of Staff, told Dill's widow, "the United States has suffered a heavy loss, and I personally have lost a dear friend, unique in my lifetime".

What explains the apotheosis of this ailing, diffident man? Alex Danchev is the first to examine Dill's Washington years in detail. The story he tells is one of backstairs influence and quiet persuasion; but the results were impressive. Dill helped to make the Anglo-American military alliance work. He was the mortar in its supreme edifice, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, through which the two allies tried to ensure common direction of their war efforts.

To understand Dill's achievement, we need to remember the prehistory of the alliance. In the First World War no real partnership was achieved. Indeed it was barely attempted. Woodrow Wilson's America was an "associate" of Britain, determined to fight the war in its own way, for its own ends, while in the inter-war period the two countries followed

separate paths, with bitter rows over naval building and trade rivalry.

In 1942, then, as Dill set to work, the onus were hardly propitious. American policymakers such as Admiral King were still fighting the war of independence, morbidly suspicious of British motives, while British officers like the testy Brooke were convinced that the Americans knew nothing about strategy and had to be led by the nose. The King-Brooke struggle over whether to give priority to the Pacific or the Mediterranean was the central strategic issue of 1942-3.

Dill's role, in Danchev's account, was twofold. He helped to create the institutions of the novel military alliance, and, through his contacts – particularly his crucial friendships with Brooke and Marshall – he made those institutions work. He served as guarantor for the Americans that Britain was serious about defeating Germany, however keen Brooke and Churchill might be about fighting in the Mediterranean. He educated Brooks and others about Washington bureaucratic politics and the US "drift" to the Pacific. Behind the scenes he prodded both sides to accept the need for a common strategy. And in the great conferences of 1943, especially Casablanca, his unobtrusive brokerage facilitated the essential strategic agreements. If the wartime alliance was a courtship, Dill was its Pandarus.

Danchev does not tell the story chronologically. Instead, his chapters illustrate facets of Dill's role – as guarantor, educator, agitator, broker and so on. Detailed examples are culled from various periods and diverse aspects of the war effort. Thus we jump from the Mediterranean, to South-East Asia, to the Bomb; to Intelligence, and so on. The result is not always easy reading, and certainly assumes a good deal of specialist knowledge.

Yet constructing a sequential narrative of Dill's Washington years would be hard. He left no cache of papers, carefully compiled to "help" future biographers portray their subject in the correct light, and his achievements have to be re-created piecemeal from numerous public and private archives on both sides of the Atlantic, supplemented by interviews with family and friends. Alex Danchev has accomplished this with indefatigable and meticulous scholarship. The result is a definitive account of Dill's Dalliance with America.

Occupation and after

David Pryce-Jones

JOHN F. SWEETS
Choices in Vichy France: The French under Nazi occupation
306pp. Oxford University Press, £22.50.
0193037510
HERBERT R. LOTTMAN
The People's Anger: Justice and revenge in post-liberation France
332pp. Hutchinson, £12.95.
001659803

Le Chagrin et la pitié (1969), Marcel Ophüls's documentary film with Clermont-Ferrand as its setting, contrasted collaboration and resistance in occupied France in terms of black and white. The debate about the role of the Vichy government was reopened. Using hitherto inaccessible archives, historians such as Robert Paxton, Michael Marrus and Pascal Ory have put a final stop to any Vichy claim to have saved France from something worse. "Polandization", the spectre raised by Laval, was not a realistic German option. Willing accomplices in deportations and mass murder, and in the brutal exploitation of French agriculture and industry, Vichy weakened the position of France and the French in every respect, material and moral.

Neither John F. Sweets nor Herbert R. Lottman would quarrel with this conclusion – Sweets states explicitly: "The French agreed to do the Germans' work for them." But both writers find that much has been exaggerated or over-dramatized; they take the side of common sense against the myth-making that was bound to arise in a political situation generating such tragic passions. Mundane facts and figures, quietly presented, make for moderation of opinion. For Sweets, collaboration and resistance alike involved only very small minorities of rival Frenchmen; for Lottman, the post-war purges were rather restrained in the circumstances, as most Frenchmen were commendably anxious to restore law and order.

Clermont-Ferrand is also the setting of Sweets's study, and a detailed and impressive piece of local history *Choices in Vichy France* is too. He confronts the simplifications of Ophüls (sometimes specifically) with what he has learnt from police files, the reports of prefects, and numerous present-day interviews. "Everything was complicated", as he is at pains to underline. The choices which each individual had to make for himself were governed by all manner of private and public considerations, which in the nature of things could not be compatible, sometimes could hardly even be defined clearly.

An industrial centre within easy reach of Vichy, Clermont-Ferrand had about 100,000 inhabitants. Firms such as Duccellier and Michelin were incorporated into the German war effort. Were workers or management supposed to prejudice their livelihoods? As it was, production levels and quality control were below what they might have been. Does responsibility for dependants not have priority over responsibility to abstractions like the nation or patriotism? When Michelin himself was deported to Germany along with several of his sons, his factory had to continue turning out tyres for the Wehrmacht, as well as some proportion for French civilians who also needed them. Monsignor Piguet, Bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, a determined advocate of the New Order, was arrested in May 1944 on a charge of helping a fugitive priest. Had he not died in Dachau, he might well have been sentenced for his Pétainism after the liberation.

In the aftermath of the 1940 collapse, Pétain and Vichy were immensely popular. Where the Germans were concerned, the French as a whole soon concluded that there was nothing to be done, either by way of hindering or helping. The Paris-based Fascist parties hardly took root in the Vichy zone, and Sweets gives the astonishingly low figure of only 100 adherents among the half-million inhabitants of the Puy-de-Dôme department. Hardly a thousand names appeared as suspected Miliciens on various lists drawn up there for arrest and trial after the war.

Resistance was on a correspondingly low scale. In the department, 238 people were murdered or executed by the Germans and 2,000

arrested and deported – eighty-six of them in November 1943, in a move against the University of Strasbourg which had been relocated to Clermont-Ferrand. It was "a temporary disaster", in Sweets's words, for the organized resistance when it offered pitched battles to the Germans in the summer of 1944, as 200 of them were killed. More constructive in the long run was the work of such men as Alexandre Varenne, the elderly and highly independent owner of the local newspaper *La Montagne*, who was habitually protesting in person to Pétain; and Alexandre Rozier, who was prepared to co-operate with the Communists in building up public confidence in eventual victory. Of course, Vichy's ineptitude in such crucial matters as the forcible conscription of labour for Germany counted for a great deal. For Sweets, the true history of the occupation is this gradual lapse of the French from belief in their own government into apathy, and then resentment against it.

Lottman provides a valuable survey of the bewildering variety of courts, tribunals and processes both regular and irregular which were instituted with the liberation in order to deal with collaborators. Those who had worn German uniform, betrayed their compatriots or had profited with the Germans, could be in no doubt of their fate. Rough justice was probably inevitable, in Lottman's opinion, and it could have been much rougher. Before D-Day, an estimated 2,500 Frenchmen had already been murdered by other Frenchmen, and afterwards a number more were similarly killed out of hand – how many it is not possible to say, but up to 9,000 according to research done by M Baudot, former inspector general of the French Archives. Lottman repeats the figure from the Ministry of Justice in 1951 of 767 death sentences ordered and carried out by liberation courts martial, which has always seemed low. Another source of unease was that collaborators had to be charged all too often, and retrospectively at that, with the invented crime of "indignité nationale", which might mean anything or nothing. Judicial crime was not unknown either, as in the execution in Algiers of the unfortunate Pierre Pucheu, who in 1943 as an ex-Vichy minister had come to offer his services to de Gaulle.

The opinions of Robert Brasillach, Georges Suarez and other outright Nazi apologists were loathsome enough, but these men were shot mostly to make an example of them when equal or worse monsters like Céline had managed to put themselves beyond the reach of the law. Once again, it was hard to make the necessary scrupulous distinctions between what had been said and what had been done, or to decide quite what was the relationship between word and act. Actors, journalists, some business men, were either persecuted or allowed to go scot-free for no good reason other than chance, their reputation, the malice and vanity of others. Was it right for Picasso, to give a famous example, to be drawing up lists of fellow artists to be proscribed, when he himself had received German officers in his studio and sold them pictures?

11,343 civil servants were sacked. 126,020 people were interned after the liberation. 108,388 cases were investigated before the new Courts of Justice, and by the time those Courts were closed 57,954 cases had been tried before them, with another 69,797 cases dealt with in the Civic Chambers. Desire for revenge, pure and simple, had been acute in the summer of 1944, and again when French deportees returned those two periods, the better their chances, with ever more lenient sentences, leading to the general amnesty of 1953.

The Communist role is not analysed by Lottman, which is a pity, for the Party activated the purges as best it could, in general with the counter-effect of disgusting people with the whole business. Maurice Thorez, the Party's secretary-general, had fled to Moscow in 1940, and it was humbug on the part of his deputy, Jacques Duclos, to be prating in 1944 about everyone else who had betrayed France. *L'Humanité* was the very first organization of any kind to make a deal with the Germans in June 1940, so that its outcries were a not very convincing screen for class warfare. The plain bloodthirstiness of the CP may have done more than anything to persuade the French that mercy was the better part of justice.

Why so barbarous?

Geoffrey Best

L. F. HABER
The Poisonous Cloud: Chemical warfare in the First World War
415pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £35.
0195891424
OMER BARTOV
The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare
214pp. Macmillan, £27.50.
033338458X

Both of these good books, one more directly than the other, bear upon a great cultural-cum-historiographical debate. Has Germany played rougher in war than her regional peers and rivals?

L. F. Haber, an economist at the University of Surrey, is the son of the Fritz Haber whose achievement as director of German chemical warfare during the First World War raised him to a certain bad eminence. *The Poisonous Cloud* surveys the whole question with an admirable range of relevant expertise and objectivity. Haber does not conclude that the Germans behaved worse in this matter than the other belligerents; they simply got there first.

Omer Bartov, a historian at Tel-Aviv University, going straight for the German jugular, comes to a more severe judgment. That the Germans and their allied troops often behaved abominably in the Eastern European countries they invaded and occupied in 1941-5 is one of the strongest pieces of evidence that can be brought forward to support the general proposition about German military style. For this, there is theoretical as well as substantive backing. On the substantive side, there are such well-remembered episodes as the manner of occupation of eastern and north-eastern France in 1870-71 and of Belgium in 1914-18, the first moves towards civilian bombing (Zeppelins), and the business on which Haber's book sheds so much new light. On the theoretical side, there are the long string of high military, political and philosophical authorities who have pooh-poohed the idea of moderation in war; the untiring repetition over three centuries of the old maxim "Kriegsraison geht vor Kriegsmanier", which may be interpreted as "Stick to the laws and customs of war unless they stop you from winning" (a maxim much quoted, it seems, in the course of the decision-making which ultimately undid the valves of the chlorine cylinders at Ypres on April 22, 1915); and the observation by other countries' international lawyers that their German confrères typically tended to more extreme explanations and extenuations than the others felt necessary or decent.

To such charges, German writers responded that their style of thought and exposition was simply franker and more realistic than others, and that they should be respected for honesty rather than vilified for ruthlessness; that their country's geographical situation and (a less attractive argument) national destiny forced it to take war more seriously than other Great Powers; and that in any case other armed

forces could on occasion be just as ruthless – for example, Sherman's march through Georgia to the sea, the last stage of Britain's suppression of the Boer rebellion, the naval blockade of Germany in the First World War, Anglo-American mass bombing in the Second.

Much could be said on both sides, but Bartov's book is the best sort of direct contribution because, while offering sensible suggestions about its connections with that debate, it goes painstakingly into one particular episode and offers soundly based conclusions about it. No impartial person any longer believes the initial post-1945 Wehrmacht "official version" of its activity on the Eastern Front. The question for many years now has been, not whether the Wehrmacht was implicated in barbarities there, but why did it willingly commit, or aid and abet, so many? It was not just a matter of "Kriegsraison geht vor Kriegsmanier", though there was plenty of that. Rather, argues Bartov, it was that the Wehrmacht took ideology a lot more seriously than we used to think and was moved in its most vital parts by the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, according to which the *Ostfront* was no ordinary war, but an epic struggle against devilishly menacing Slavic Bolshevik/Jewish *Untermenschen*.

Besides giving a rich sketch of that ideology, Bartov goes into much new detail to demonstrate how it permeated all ranks of the three divisions he has closely examined and how it did its dire work there. His evidence seems to show that it positively intensified as the war progressed, which leads him to argue that the success of this indoctrination was the principal explanation of German troops' tenacity in face of great odds.

The value and interest of Bartov's book are increased by two daring departures: a thoughtful discussion of the psychology of "belief" in such things as the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and the *Führerprinzip*, and, reverting to the debate as to whether the Germans allowed themselves to behave worse in this war than other major competitors (the Japanese of course above all), an interesting and temperate "comparison of barbarities", which returns to the regrettable conclusion that they did.

It is a pity that his book is marked by more repetition than seems quite respectable in a short book, some of the technical detail is overdone, and the maps at the end are a bit of a show-off. Justice moreover requires it to be said that the gist of the book's argument about that *Weltanschauung* and the officer corps' embracing of it was well and concisely stated by Jürgen Förster, a historian nowhere mentioned here, in his contribution to Wilhelm Deist's 1985 collection, *The German Military in the Age of Total War* (reviewed in the TLS, January 10, 1986).

Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany by Martin Broszat has recently been translated by V. R. Berghahn (LS7pp. Leamington Spa: Berg, £19; paperback, £5.95. 0 85496 502 2). The book is a useful introduction to a complex subject and Berghahn writes in his foreword that the book is "written with a good eye for the telling quotation and illustration".

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D. S. HUTCHINSON
The Virtues of Aristotle
 139pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.95.
 0710208588

Incitements to philosophy

DAVID BOSTOCK
Plato's "Phaedo"
225pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.
0 19 824919 5

After antique wisdom

C. M. WOODHOUSE
George Gemistos Plethon: The last of the
Hellenes
391pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £40.
0198247672

Evidently, Pletho poses in acute form the perennial problem of Hellenism's cohesiveness.

This perception of the *Ethics*' contemporary relevance has been in part prepared for by the continuing development of philosophical scholarship in the analytic tradition. The study of ancient Greek thought is one of the success stories of current British philosophy: a field in which, unusually, the pace is still often set on this side of the Atlantic, as for example in the new wave of interest in Hellenistic philosophy. Where Aristotle's ethics are concerned, the principal scholarly advance of the last decade or so has been the reevaluation of his other major treatise, the *Eudemian Ethics* ("*Ethics*" usually stands for "*Nicomachean Ethics*"): a work which shares some books with the *Nicomachean*, and often runs parallel to it, but has a clearer overall structure and sometimes provides fuller and more painstaking arguments for its conclusions. The most notable contributions have come from John Cooper (of Princeton), Anthony Kenny and Michael Woods (two leading Oxonian Aristotelians).

The Virtues of Aristotle by D. S. Hutchinson belongs very firmly in the context I have been sketching. Philosophically, Hutchinson is convinced of the truth of most of Aristotle's views on virtue and happiness, and more generally of the virtues of his whole approach to moral philosophy. In scholarship, which is where the book really aims to make its contribution, he is a scrupulous exponent of the analytical method, and applies it comparatively to the relevant portions of both *Ethics* (as well as other related texts), not concealing his own preference for *EE*. The work has a narrower scope than the title suggests: nothing on the intellectual excellences, the unity of virtue, the individual moral virtues, or the doctrine of the mean. It focuses austere on the precise question: "What is a virtue of character?" And

The chief reward lies in the fresh, careful scrutiny of the network of detailed conceptual connections which the author establishes between the main elements of Aristotle's theory. There is a bonus, however, in the chapter on Aristotle's argument from man's function (viz. living a life of rational activity) to his account of the good life and human happiness. Here Hutchinson turns aside from close engagement with the text to take on the many critics of the argument, and to maintain – quite convincingly – that many of their objections are misconceived. In the end he has to concede that it may be that (as Bernard Williams has insisted) rationality is, like so many human characteristics, morally ambivalent, and therefore too uncertain a foundation for a theory of the good life. But any reader of the *Ethics* will find this useful and approachable discussion of the topic.

What Bostock does do, he does excellently. The long chapter on the recollection argument, for example, which occupies about a quarter of the book, is a model of its kind: clear, judicious and a telling account of the kinds of thing the text is about. Here and elsewhere, despite Bostock's own modest disclaimer, there is certainly plenty to interest what the jacket calls "more seasoned readers of Plato" as well as the beginner. Perhaps all would have been well if the book had carried a different title, which did not suggest that it dealt with the *Phaedo* as a whole. As it is, it looks like an extreme example of that well-established tradition in recent Platonic scholarship, of pretending that the dialogues are just more or less cleverly disguised Aristotelian-type treatises (which some might be, but certainly not the *Phaedo*). This may simply be because Bostock is using the *Phaedo* as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself.

MARIO ATTILIO LEVI
 Augusto e il suo tempo
 578 pp. Milan: Rusconi. L.42,000.
 63 18 18006 1

Nevertheless the reappearance of *Ottaviano capote* is welcome. It remains the best narrative of the years from Caesar's murder to Actium, given that Syme's *Roman Revolution* offers rather a brilliant and allusive commentary on a narrative presumed already known. Mario Aulilio Levistill believes that Cicero saw in Octavian the *principes* adumbrated in the *De Republica*. "That is certainly not what Octavian thought, not did it occur to Antony, whose brilliant analysis of the situation in his open letter to Octavian, and the consuls of 43 bc, cited and discussed by Cicero in the thirteenth *Philippic*, merits closer attention than it gets here. Octavian was surely right to suppose that Cicero was right."

and the republicans intended to use him as a weapon against Antony before discarding him in his turn, Levi is also perhaps too ready to accept the official version of the liquidation of Salvius Rufus. But he deals well with the activities of Antony in the East, bringing out clearly how much the options open to him depended on the changing course of events in the West.

Roman architecture certainly owed a debt to Greece, but MacDonald is right in not underestimating the Western contribution; the spontaneous creation of suitable urban forms throughout the Empire, and the positive contribution of Rome itself. As a student of Roman Britain, I found that not the least exciting discovery I made in reading this book was that London (not often mentioned in its pages) with its major buildings lying off its main east-west street, must have looked rather like the much better-known Roman town of Ostia and would not have seemed barbarous to the visitors from stately Ephesus. In all its long history this was surely the time when the *aficionado* of urbanism would most have liked to walk its streets.

The illustrations in *An Urban Appraisal*, this second volume of *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*, are superbly chosen, illuminating the text as well as being interesting in themselves. They move the reader through the streets of the city and into its individual buildings, demonstrating, for instance, how a vista is engineered by using the topography of the place, natural or man-made. It is a joy to find a book so attractively designed, worthy of both its author and his subject.

munications are, however, only one reason why Augustus chose not to set up a mobile reserve: one might also ask who could have been trusted to command it and where it might have been stationed. On imperial strategy Levi takes a stimulatingly broad view. Yet the Romans themselves did not talk in terms of trade routes to China, and such factors need to be brought into closer relation with those which contemporaries believed, or purported to believe, of paramount importance. Though ready to credit that Augustus would have invaded Parthia in 20 if his diplomatic moves had failed, Levi still holds that the *clades Variana* made him abandon his dream of expansion to the Elbe. Again that is not what Augustus says and he, more subtle than inferior politician, who lie with unfailing and transparent composure, occasionally told the truth.

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For a long time there has been a need to replace the useful but very outdated *Classical Dictionary* of Lemprière. For factual and historical matters this was done years ago by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and, with the publication of Pierre Grimal's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Lemprière can finally be relegated to the shelf reserved for books which have honourably outlived their usefulness."

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